

S E R M O N S

A N D

D I S C O U R S E S

O N

P R A C T I C A L S U B J E C T S ;

Never before Printed.

By *ROBERT MOSS*, D. D.
Late Dean of *Ely*, and Preacher to the
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S E R M O N I.

Observations on *St. Paul's Defence*
before *Felix*.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

*And as he reasoned of Righteousness,
Temperance, and Judgment to come,
Felix trembled, and answered, Go
thy way for this Time, when I have
a convenient Season, I will call for
Thee.*

WE have in these Words a summa-SERM. I.
ry Account of a weighty Dis-
course of Saint *Paul* the Apostle
before *Felix* the Governor of *Judæa*. And

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it

SERM. I. it affords us a remarkable Instance of the Power of divine Truth to awaken natural Conscience, and to startle the boldest of Sinners; and of the Dexterity of a harden'd Sinner the mean while, in stifling the Conviction of his own Mind, and putting off the Thoughts, and frustrating the Means of his Conversion.

And if we bestow any Attention in considering what Influence this Discourse had upon the unbelieving *Felix*; how shocking it was at the first Onset, and yet how slight and transient the Impression, we may see our own Faces, as it were, in a Glass; and if we don't take *Pains* to forget *what manner of Men* we are, we may learn from the Example before us, to make up what is wanting, and to correct what is amiss in our selves.

For the Workings of all Men's Hearts are pretty much the same in Cases of this Nature, excepting that the Belief of a wicked *Christian* is still a sharper Reproof to his Practice; and by how much the Checks of Conscience are louder, when at any Time the Charge is brought home to *him*, by so much heavier will *his* Condemnation be, unless he obey the heavenly Warning.

That



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That therefore the Words of Saint Paul^{SERM. I.} may not lose their Weight with us also, for whose Instruction they were written, I beseech you to attend to a more particular Consideration of them, and to go along with me in the Application of them to our own proper Use.

Now there are three Things more especially that offer themselves to our Consideration in the Text, viz.

First, The Subject of the Apostle's Discourse; *he reasoned*, it seems, *of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.*

Secondly, The Operation and Effect it had upon the Person to whom it was addressed; *as he reasoned* of these Things, *Felix trembled.*

Thirdly, The Manner of the Apostle's Dismission thereupon; *Go thy way*, said he, *for this Time, and when I have a convenient Season I will call for thee.*

First, The first Thing considerable is the Subject of the Apostle's Discourse; *he reasoned*, it seems, *of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.*

SERM. I.

The Occasion of which was thus ; St. Paul had been accused before *Felix* by *Tertullus* the Orator, as a *pestilent seditious Fellow*, a *Ring-leader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*, a *Prophaner of the Temple*, and an *Innovator in Religion*, (*Acts* xxiv. 5.) To all which he made a noble Defence, protesting against the whole Charge, as false and malicious ; vindicating his own Innocence towards God and Man ; and proving his Faith to be the same that his Accusers would seem to contend for, as being built upon the Law and the Prophets, and his Hope to be no other than they themselves (all excepting the *Sadducees*) allow'd, viz. that *there should be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the just and the unjust*.

This is what passed at his first Hearing and the Governor heard him, not only with Patience, but with some sort of Countenance being prepared in his Favour by a Letter that *Lyfias* the chief Captain sent along with him.

However, he deferred to give Judgment upon a Reason that had a very good Colour. For the Question before him being partly of Law, and partly of Fact ; and he not being perfectly acquainted with the Law, nor sufficient

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sufficiently convinced of the Fact, refused to ^{SERM. I.} determine any thing, till such Time as *Lyfias* should come down, and inform him more fully.

In the mean Time, whether his Friendship to *Lyfias*, or the Hopes of a Bribe (as is intimated Ver. 26.) had helped to mollify him, he gave exprefs Orders that the Prisoner should be pretty much at large, and treated with all Humanity.

And a few Days after, to gratify his Wife, *Drusilla*, he sent for him and heard him concerning the Faith in Christ. For his Wife, being a *Jew* by Profession, had a Curiosity, it should seem, to hear what this Broacher of a new Sect could say for himself.

But Saint *Paul*, instead of enlarging in his own Defence, or rendering any farther Account of his *Faith*, took this Opportunity to read them a Lecture of good *Christian* Morality.

He knew very well that it was not out of any hearty Good-Will, or any real Desire to be instructed, but upon other Views, that he was sent for. And therefore he took care neither to feed the Husband's Covetousness, nor to humour the Wife's Curiosity; but rather to make Amends for both, by seasonable

SERM. I. Advice and sound Argument, reasoning of
Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.

And certainly, if, as Solomon says, *Prov. xxv. 11. A Word fitly spoken be like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver*, nothing could be more beautiful in its Time and Place, nothing more suitable in its Application to the Office and Character of the Person, than this Discourse with which the Apostle so freely entertained the Governour and his Wife: For *Felix* (as the Historian describes him, *Taciti Ann. Lib. 12. Hist. Lib. 5.*) was a Man of no manner of Reputation for Justice or Moderation, for Temper or Conduct. So far from it, that he was infamous for the contrary. He thought his Authority sufficient to bear him out with Impunity in all his Villanies: And there was a constant Emulation in Mischief between him and *Ventidius Cumanus*, to whom he was both Colleague and Successor. And so well agreed they were between themselves, that they set the People together by the Ears, that they might the better divide the Spoils, and grow rich upon the Plunder. And, to finish his Character in the Historian's own Words, (*Taciti Hist.*

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Hist. Lib. 5.) *per omnem sævitiam & libidi-* SERM. I.
nem jus regium servili ingenio exercuit ; i. e.

He lorded it like a Tyrant in his Province with all manner of outrageous Lust and Cruelty, but yet with the same servile Spirit that he was born with.

And *Drußilla* was fit to be the Partner of his Lewdness. For she is branded by *Josephus* (*Antiq. Jud. Lib. 20. Chap. 6.*) as a very lascivious Woman, and one that deserted the King of the *Emiffens*, her Husband, to take up with this *uncircumcised Paramour*, who notwithstanding did not think fit to trust her to her own Inclinations, but made use of the *Magician's Art* to win her to his Bed; and they sought to colour the Adultery with the Formality of Marriage.

Such are the Characters of *Felix* and *Drußilla*, and such Saint *Paul* knew them to be; and by the secret Direction and Assistance of the Holy Spirit, he took Courage to level his Discourse against those flagrant Sins, of which the very Mention could not chuse but make both their Ears to tingle. And yet the Apostle, though he must needs be aware, that it was an ungrateful Topick, and such as would go near to lose his Cause, if not en-

SERM. I. danger his Life, reasoned of these Things notwithstanding; and, for ought appears to the contrary, persisted in his Argument, managing it with his best Skill, and urging it with undaunted Zeal.

Nay the Application seems to have been pointed so directly at the Persons, that 'tis a wonder they did not resent the Indignity, and punish the Reviler. For to preach up Justice and Equity according to the *Christian* Standard of *doing to others, as we would have them to do unto us*, was indeed a bitter Reproach to a Man that had lived by Fraud and Oppression, Rapine and Violence; especially to one that had been guilty of that most irreparable Injury of defiling another's Wife, and seducing her from her Allegiance to her lawful Husband.

And then to enforce the Exhortation, by earnestly recommending the amiable Graces of Purity and Chastity to those, *who had solaced themselves with forbidden Loves* (as the Harlot Phrases it in the *Proverbs*, vii. 18.) and lived in the notorious Commission of Adultery, was to fasten the Reproach, and make it still more stabbing.

And

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And in the Close of all, to put such a one in Mind of an After-Reckoning, such an exorbitant Offender, who, besides his private Immoralities, had been very corrupt, partial, and tyrannical in his Administration of the Government; I say, to put such a one in Mind of a future Judgment, to which he must expect one Day to be accountable for all his Misdoings, was not only to reproach him, but to menace him too; it was to provoke the Tyrant to his Face, and to try both his Courage and his Patience to the uttermost.

And yet this is what the Apostle resolutely undertook; and 'tis what well became both his Zeal and Discretion. For he knew that his Patient had an ulcerated Conscience, and therefore he resolved to lay it open. He knew the Operation would touch him to the Quick, with the most exquisite Pain; but he thought that a better Symptom than Deadness and Insensibility. He knew that the Experiment might prove dangerous to himself, and expose him to the Rage of a potent Enemy; but he committed his Cause to God, and esteemed it a noble Hazard, if by the Peril of his own Life, he might be able to *rescue a Soul from Death.* We

SERM. I. We see therefore that Saint *Paul's* Subject was well and wisely chosen, when he adventured to reason before *Felix* and *Drusilla*, of *Righteousness*, and *Temperance*, and *Judgment* to come.

From whence we may observe,

1st, That it is the Duty of a Minister, or Preacher of the Gospel, to use his best Discretion in the Choice of proper Subjects, and to handle such Portions of God's Word as he finds apposite to his Purpose faithfully and impartially, that so he may the better obviate the reigning Vices of the Age he lives in, and speak home to the Consciences of those he has to do with.

This, I am sure, was *St. Paul's* Practice, and, as I take it, it ought to be our Pattern: For I think it will hardly be said, that what *St. Paul* did was by virtue of his Apostolical Commission, and that it is not within the Sphere of every ordinary Pastor.

For certainly the Care of Souls must belong to every Pastor; and that weighty Care can never be well discharged without a diligent Survey of the State of his Flock; without a particular Enquiry into the Cause of those spiritual Diseases to which they are incident; without

Defence before Felix.

II

without suitable and seasonable Applications, SERM. I.
and proper Methods of Cure, whether it be
by milder *Lenitives*, or rougher Medicines.
To be plain, the Minister of God cannot be
faithful to his Trust, unless he *preach the Word,*
and be instant in Season, out of Season, and re-
prove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-suffering
and Doctrine, (2 Tim. iv. 2.) And particu-
larly, if he knows or suspects the People with
which he is charged to be guilty of, or prone
to any particular Sins, that are sheltered in a
Multitude, and that Custom has made fashi-
onable; in that Case he ought both to hasten
and sharpen his Correction, and pierce their
very Souls *by the Sword of the Spirit, which*
is the Word of God; that so they may feel
that they have done amiss, and avoid by pre-
sent Pain, the future Danger; and that what
he urges may persuade the more cogently, he
ought to remind them of the *Terrors of the*
Lord, and thunder them in their Ears, to
rouze them from a deadly Lethargy.

If the Question be here started, whether
Saint *Paul's* extraordinary Zeal may be drawn
into Example, in reprehending Persons pub-
lickly, and to their very Faces, as he did
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SERM. I. ought to be publickly arraigned, but without
 Application to particular Persons: That must
 be left to every Man's own Conscience; or,
 if Need be, it must be reserved for some Opportunity in private, when it may be done more safely and prudently; and perhaps this personal Reprehension of *Felix* by the Apostle was what pass'd only in private Conversation. But,

2dly, It may also be observed from Saint *Paul's* Example, that 'tis the Duty of God's Ministers to appear boldly in the Cause of God, and to reprove Vice courageously, notwithstanding the Power and Greatness of its Patrons, and the small Probability of seeing any good Success of their Labours. I say, 'tis their Duty notwithstanding, if for no other Reason, yet because 'tis the Cause of God they are concerned for, and his Warrant is sufficient to bear them out against all Opposers.

But besides, generally speaking, there is nothing so sneaking and mean-spirited as the Sinner; and let him be never so great and mighty, there is not one in 100,000,000 that is able to look up through his own Confusion, when he is conscious of his own Guilt, and knows that he is justly accused. And

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And if there be any of such profligate Consciences, as to conquer the Sense both of Shame and Fear, yet there is nothing can give Authority to Vice; that must and will look little and contemptible, even when its Profelytes glory in their shameful Pride, and put on a Shew of false Bravery. Nay, if Wickedness should have the Countenance of Authority, and get itself established even by a Law, the Ministers of God ought not to be discouraged in the Discharge of their Duty, but they should rather muster all their Courage and Resolution, to oppose and pull it down again. *For what Marvel is it, if we do see the Oppression of the Poor, and violent perverting of Judgment and Justice in a Province, since he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they (Eccl. v. 8.)* This was the Case of *Felix* when Saint Paul read him the Lecture that made him tremble; nor did he fear his Displeasure, tho' he had caused a *High-Priest* to be murdered for using too much Freedom; nor was there any great Hopes of working Good on him; and yet the Apostle (to fulfil his own Duty, and teach us ours) *reasoned with him of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.*

SERM. I. *Secondly*, I proceed now to the second thing considerable in the Text, viz. the Effect which the Apostle's Discourse had upon the Person to whom it was address. *Felix trembled as he reasoned of these Things.*

And how could he otherwise chuse? For he was conscious that he had oppressed the People he should have protected; that he had plundered and pillaged the Province he was sent to govern; that he had sacrificed every thing that came in his Way to his insatiable Avarice, Lust, and Cruelty; and in particular, that the Woman whom he called his Wife, was the Spoil of another Man's Bed, that he won her by Sorcery, and kept her as an Adulteress.

And these his Iniquities now flying in his Face, no Wonder that he began to cast up the dreadful Account with Fear. For as the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* expresses it (Chap. xvii. 11.) *Wickedness condemned by her own Witness is very timorous, and being pressed with Conscience, always forecasteth grievous Things.* And even the Bodings of natural Conscience, when it recoils upon a Man with the Conviction of such manifest Sins, are very terrible to him, although he is ignorant whence

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whence they proceed, or where they are like to end.

But when the Light of God's Word or Spirit is darted into a guilty Mind, O the Horror and Astonishment that it brings along with it! O the frightful Discoveries that then are made! Then it appears but too plain, that Conscience was too true a Monitor, and that the Cause of Men's Fears is worse, much worse than could well be imagined. *For if their own Hearts condemn them* (there is no avoiding the fatal Consequence, for) *God is greater than their Hearts, and knoweth all Things.* (1 Ep. John iii. 20.) And all that he knoweth to be amiss he will most certainly condemn, and what he condemns he will most severely punish. And if the secret Lashes of a Conscience thus awakened be much more intolerable than all the Tortures that human Cruelty can invent, what must that everlasting Punishment be, *where the Worm never dieth, and the Fire is not quenched?* And therefore when Saint Paul discoursed Felix, in the Spirit of Power, and not only brought his Sins to his Remembrance, but also set the Punishment before his Eyes, and presented him with the amazing Prospect of God's
righteous

SERM. I. righteous Judgments, and his eternal Wrath, and fiery Indignation, it is no Wonder that he was mightily alarmed; it is no Wonder, whilst the Apostle thus *reasoned*, that *Felix trembled*.

From whence we may observe,

1st, The secret Force, and the strange Penetration of the Word of God, in searching and sifting, in trying and convicting the Consciences of Men. So says the Scripture of itself (*Heb. iv. 12.*) *The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow; and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart.* But all this mighty Energy does not consist in the meer Pomp of Words, nor in any Sleight of Rhetorick or Reason, but in a certain Demonstration that is peculiar to the Spirit, which though seemingly weak and foolish, is yet able to confound both the wise and mighty. For should any Man have been hardy enough to set upon this arbitrary Governor, in order to argue him out of his illegal Practices, and make him ashamed of his horrid Enormities, the Experiment would probably have cost him
his

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his Life, as it did the High-Priest that once try'd it. But let an Apostle once come begirt with *the Armour of God*, and the *Hector* grows tame: Let the Prisoner begin to impeach him, and the Judge himself turns pale: Let *Paul* but reason, and the Impression is strong though not lasting; for behold! *Felix* trembles.

2dly, It may be farther observed from hence, how forlorn and desperate the Case of such Men is, as are perfectly insensible to all Impressions of this Nature. For if *Felix*, that was a profligate, hardened Wretch, trembled at the Reasoning of Saint Paul, and the Alarms of a drowzy Conscience startled by the Apprehension of a future Judgment, certainly that Sinner, who in the same or the like Circumstances, shews no Tokens of Remorse, or even of a worldly Fear or Sorrow, must be quite past his Feeling, and even *spiritually dead in Trespasses and Sins*. For otherwise one would think, that if he that was an *Infidel*, could tremble at the very Mention of a *Judgment to come*, which perhaps had scarce ever before entered into his sensuous Thoughts, much more should the *Christian*, who by his Profession is supposed firmly

SERM. I. ly to believe and expect it. And yet such
 ~~~~~ Christians there are, so careless and fearless,  
 so stupid and senseless, that they can allow  
 themselves in the grossest Impieties, and  
 work all Uncleanness with Greediness, and yet  
 have the Word of God, and his Threats and  
 Terrors continually sounding in their Ears,  
 without the least Sign of any extraordinary  
 Commotion. But I say, this is such a Degree  
 of Insensibility as can hardly consist with any  
 Remains of a spiritual Life; for were it not  
 so, even a *Felix* would tremble.

Thirdly, I pass on now to the third and last  
 Thing to be considered in the Text; viz.  
 the Manner of Saint Paul's Dismissal, after  
 he had reasoned *Felix* into a Fit of trembling:  
*Go thy way* (said he) *for this time, when I*  
*have a convenient Season, I will call for thee.*

He had heard, it seems, enough for the  
 present; and too much perhaps to be digested  
 by a sickly Mind. The Truth that had been  
 told him was plain, but not pleasing; and  
 the Reasons offered were demonstrative, but  
 clear against himself: His Sins were too no-  
 torious to be concealed, and yet too dear to  
 be parted with on the sudden: The Warn-



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ing that had been given him, was astonish-  
ing, but if too much heeded, it might damp  
all his present Enjoyments, he feared, with  
the Thoughts of Futurity. And therefore  
he chose to put an End to the Discourse, and  
hoped to dismiss these troublesome Thoughts,  
together with his haranguing Prisoner, and to  
lose them in the Hurry of Business, or the  
Amusements of his Pleasures, or at least to  
lay them aside till some other Opportunity,  
whose Return he neither wished nor sought  
for. In the mean time, he took his Leave in  
courteous manner of the Apostle: *Go thy way  
for this time, when I have a convenient Sea-  
son I will call for thee.*

From whence we may observe,

1<sup>st</sup>, The Slavery and Infelicity of those,  
who are in Bondage to their own Lusts, that  
*seeing, they should not see, and hearing, they  
should not hear, lest at any time they should be  
converted, and their Sins be forgiven.* For  
this seems to have been the Case of *Felix*:  
His Reason 'tis probable was well nigh con-  
vinced, but his Heart was far enough from  
being converted; and he appears, notwith-  
standing his Surprize at first, to be more afraid  
of parting *with* his Sins, than of being damn'd

SERM. I. *for them.* And thus it is with all those who *have sold themselves to do evil:* They are Slaves at the Oar, and sin on they *must*, in spite of Conviction, and in the Face of Danger; and if Conscience should chance to be disturbed, and begin to grow clamorous, the quarrelsome *Inmate* must be charmed asleep again, and some Way or other diverted, or soothed with good Words, and sent away, as Saint Paul was by Felix, with a *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient Season I will call for thee.*

2dly, It may be observed from hence, what a wretched Infatuation habitual Sinners are blinded with, and how fondly they deceive themselves into their own Destruction. For they are resolved at any Rate to *procrastinate* with God, and to put off both the Thoughts and the Time of their Repentance, as long as is possible. And to this End their common Refuge is to run away from themselves, and herd in idle Company, and squander away their Time in vain Pleasures, and drown Melancholy in forced Mirth, and dose Conscience with an intoxicating Draught, or any thing to assuage the Pain, or avert the Peril of Thinking. That is to say, they are resolv'd,

if they can, not to think at all, for fear of  
 thinking wisely ; they are resolved to lose no  
 Time in sinning (whatever they do in re-  
 penting) for fear the Sum should not be big  
 enough when they come to cast up the Total.  
 Blessed God ! what Folly, what Stupidity is  
 this ! and yet to make the Inconsistency more  
 palpable, they own themselves to be con-  
 vinced all the while of the Necessity of  
 Repentance ! and however indisposed, or  
 not thoroughly disposed for it at present,  
 yet they do propose to set about it at some  
 Time hereafter. And why not now, as well  
 as hereafter ? But only that *now* is *now*, and  
 hereafter is at a Distance, and may chance  
 never to come at them. And what would  
 they be doing the mean while ? Would they  
 bid the Sun stand still, or stop the rapid  
 Course of Time, or compound with Death  
 for a new Term of Years, or plead in Arrest  
 of Judgment ? Alas ! this is raving Madness !  
 Death and Judgment keep their Pace, and  
 their Damnation slumbereth not, though  
 they are so desperate, as to dally with it, and  
 to hazard their *All*, their *Eternity*, upon one  
 uncertain Opportunity, that perhaps will ne-  
 ver come near them. And if they should

SERM. I. catch at the last Moments of Time, and hope to bestow them in working out their Repentance, what a mad Expectation were this, to think to dispatch so great a Work in an instant? And what Security can they have aforehand, that their Hearts will then serve them, or God's Grace assist them, or his Mercy accept them.

Alas! 'tis to be feared, that imperfect Disposition which they formerly hoped to nurse up against *hereafter*, was too weakly to be so long-lived. Nay 'tis to be suspected, that those faint Pretences were never hearty enough at Bottom, to grow up into stedfast Resolution, or take Effect in good Earnest. For we don't find, after *Felix* had dismissed Saint *Paul* with a *Go thy way for this time*, that he ever thought of that convenient Season he once talked of. He sent for him indeed afterwards, in hopes to squeeze Money from him, but it does not appear that he either designed or desired to hear farther concerning the *Faith in Christ*, or *Righteousness*, *Temperance*, and *Judgment to come*. And I am afraid the Example is almost as rare, even among those that call themselves *Christians*. 'Tis not safe therefore for Men to trust



trust even their own Hearts with such dilatory Pretences, lest they should prove in the End, as they mostly do, to be but treacherous Prevarications. For when the Sinner speaks his Conscience fair, and says, *Be still for this time, and go thy way, I will hear thee farther hereafter*; 'tis a Sign indeed that he is willing to get rid of it for the *present*, but no Sign at all that he will keep his Word hereafter. But when he can find in his Heart to answer the Holy Spirit in like manner, and when it is kindly Pleading, and gently striving with him, say softly again, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient time, I will call for thee*, the Presumption is inexcusable, and the Resistance fatal; 'tis the deplorable Symptom of an utter Reprobate. To conclude therefore; let us all endeavour to profit by the Admonition and Example of the Text: Let us suffer the Word of Reproof patiently, and apply it impartially: Let us lend an attentive Ear to the Checks of our own Consciences, and the sound of the Gospel awakening us to Repentance; and let us obey the Motions of God's Holy Spirit, kindly offering its Assistance: Let us not only tremble with *Felix*; but work

**SERM. I.** *out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling;* and let us lay hold of the present Opportunity, lest it slide through our Fingers, and be lost to us for ever. In fine, let *us exhort one another to-day, whilst it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin,* and by delaying Repentance too long, find no Place for it at last, even tho' we seek it carefully with Tears. Which God of his infinite Mercy avert, in and through *Jesus Christ* our Lord; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be ascribed, as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*



# S E R M O N II.

A Caution against Hypocrisy, the  
Leaven of the *Pharisees*.

LUKE xii. I.

*In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable Multitude of People, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his Disciples first of all, beware ye of the Leaven of the Pharisees, which is Hypocrisy.*

**O**UR Bleffed Lord, who was very SERM. II. Truth and Goodness itself, without the least Allay, or Mixture, was above all Things a declared Enemy to great Pro-

SERM. II. *Professions and high Pretences to Religion, without any suitable Practice to make them good. And the Pharisees, the chief Teachers and Leaders of the People in those Days, being notoriously guilty in this Particular, he lays hold of every Occasion to pluck off the Disguise they wore, and to tax them publicly with their Insincerity, and threaten them with their deserved Doom; that so, if possible, he might disabuse the poor deluded People, and rescue them out of the Hands of these blind and false Guides.*

But he is still more particularly careful to give his own Disciples repeated Warnings of these *hypocritical Seducers*, lest they also should be imposed upon, or infected with the like corrupt Doctrines and Practices. Doctrines and Practices, so perfectly irreconcilable with that purer Religion which *he had taught them*, and commissioned *them to teach throughout the whole World.*

And as he apprehended no greater Obstacle to its Success and Progress, than what was likely to come from this Quarter, he cautions them here, as he had often done before, *beware ye of the Leaven of the Pharisees, which is Hypocrisy.*

And



And 'tis a Caution in which *Christians* at SERM. II.  
all times are concerned. For this *Pharisaical Leaven*, wherever it spreads (as very apt to spread it is) is so inconsistent with the Nature of Religion, so opposite to its Power and Virtue, so directly contrary to the *Simplicity that is in Christ*, and that upright *Conversation, which becometh his Gospel*, that an *hypocritical Christian* is even worse than was the *painted Pharisee*, as sinning against the greater Light, and abusing his own Conscience more grossly, and mocking and dishonouring God, in a manner still more detestable, and less excusable than the other.

That therefore we may all learn to avoid this infectious *Leaven*, and get free from that Guilt and Shame which naturally belong to it, and that whole Weight of Woe which sooner or later will certainly fall upon it, I shall employ the rest of your Time, and I hope not altogether unprofitably,

*First*, In enquiring into the Nature of this Sin of *Hypocrisy*, that so ye may know it, and judge of it.

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, In representing to you the heinous Aggravations with which it is attended; that so you may abhor and detest it as it deserves.

*Thirdly*, In setting down some of the most distinguishing Marks by which it usually discovers itself, that so ye may be in the less Danger either of deceiving yourselves, or of being deceived by it.

*Fourthly*, And this done, I shall conclude with the proper Uses of the whole.

*First*, I am to enquire into the Nature of this Sin of *Hypocrisy*, that so ye may know it, and judge of it.

And you will have a general Notion of its Nature and Qualities, from this short Description.

*Hypocrisy* is a specious Appearance of great Piety and Sanctity, that is destitute the meanwhile of any real Goodness, or at least defective in the main and most essential Parts of it.

It is a specious Appearance of great Sanctity. For an *Hypocrite* (as the Origin of the Word imports) is one that acts a Part in Disguise; and that he may pass for what he appears, he takes care to act that Part with Abundance

dance of Pomp and Shew, the better to amuse SERM. II.  
and delude the Beholders. And as your  
*Poets* and *Actors* upon a Stage, when labour-  
ing to express a Passion to the Height, are  
too apt to strain it to a Pitch that is beyond  
what is natural and just: So 'tis observable  
of the *Hypocrite*, that is the *Actor* at Church  
or religious Assemblies, that to carry the Ap-  
pearance of the greater *Zealot*, he strives to  
out-do the serious and devout *Christian*, that  
is truly such, in all the outward Expressions  
and most visible and pompous Signs of De-  
votion.

And the Reason of this Practice is easily  
spell'd out; for it helps to carry on his main  
Plot, which is to be thought a pure *Saint*,  
and under that *unsuspected Mask*, to promote  
other un sanctified Ends of his own; which  
that he may the better conceal, he makes all  
the outward Shew he can of much *Zeal* and  
Affection in God's Worship, and much Pre-  
ciseness and Exactness in his own Behaviour;  
and all this without any great Hardship or  
Constraint upon himself; for by his Dexter-  
ity in counterfeiting he can easily frame him-  
self into this seemingly religious Posture, and  
Course of living, without so much as *morti-  
fying one single Lust*. And

And so it soon appears upon a closer Examination. For strip him once of the false Dress, with which he strove to disguise himself, and you will always find him, after all his mighty Pretensions, either wholly destitute of all real Goodness, or at best shamefully defective in it.

If he be of the grosser Sort of *Hypocrites* who act the religious Part out of meer *Pageantry*, and with no other End but to cover and colour the Mischief and Wickedness that they harbour in their Hearts, that they may execute it the more effectually. Look narrowly into such a Man, and instead of any of the genuine Fruits of that extraordinary Holiness which he pretends to, you will find him to be *leavened* throughout with all manner of Injustice, and Licentiousness, nay, and with downright *Irreligion*, and *Atheism* at Bottom.

If he be of the more refined Sort of *Hypocrites*, who not only retain a Sense of Religion, but perhaps value themselves highly upon their imaginary Proficiency in it, and reckon themselves more holy than their Neighbours, upon the Score for instance of a set of *Orthodox Opinions*, of more than ordinary



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SERM. II.

ordinary Nicety in observing the least of God's Commandments, of purer Worship, of a stricter Education, of a more irreproachable Conversation, and the like; I say, examine even this *demure Pretender*, and you will find that he is puff'd up and bloated with Pride, that his most specious Actions favour strong of Vain-Glory, that he is sower'd with Cenforiousness, Malice, and Envy; and that he is guilty (*blind Wretch* as he is) of greater Failings than even those whom he is so apt to despise in Comparison of himself.

And the Character that we have upon Record of the *Pharisees*, the great Masters of this *sanctified Craft*, gives us the just and full Pourtraiture of *Hypocrisy*, both in its grossest and most enormous Miscarriages, and in its subtlest Daubings and Refinings.

Sometimes they stand charged with the greatest of Crimes, such as transgressing God's sacred Commandments by *Traditions* of their own inventing, and teaching People to distinguish away all that Duty, and Affection, and Succour, and Maintenance, that they owed to their Parents, under the goodly Pretext of having solemnly devoted their Substance to God and his Service, such as *devouring of Widows*

**SERM. II.** *Widows Houses, and for a Pretence making long Prayers; [Matt. xxix. 14. Mark xii. 40. Luke xx. 47.]* (as it were) at once to secure the poor silly Prey, and consecrate the wicked Extortion. Such as *building the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnishing the Sepulchres of the Righteous* (as it were) in professed Abhorrence of the Cruelty of their Forefathers, that had slain them; when at the same time they were desperately bent to *fill up the Measure of their Fathers*; and so derive upon themselves *all the innocent Blood that was shed from innocent Abel, to the crucified Jesus and his blessed Martyrs.*

Which Instances are sufficient to convict them of the vilest and grossest Sort of *Hypocrisy*. For they affected to pass all the while for the strictest Observers of that Law, for the faithfullest *Guardians* (without Doubt) to *Widows and Orphans*, and for the most respectful of all Men to the *Prophets* and their Memory; and yet they made use of the venerable Name and Colour of Religion, only to shelter the worst of Practices. And 'tis remarkable even to a *Proverb*, that amongst all the Copiers after this Pattern since, the greatest of *Villanies* have been those that commenced

in by that glorious Preface, and compleated by a solemn Appeal to Heaven for the Justice of them.

Of which we have a very notable Example in that *Arch-Rebel*, and *Arch-Hypocrite*, of our own Nation, who after all the Rapine, Murder, and Sacrilege that he had reformed us with, resolved to mount the Throne upon the Neck of his *butcher'd Sovereign*, and when his Way was a little obstructed by the Scruples or Misgivings of some, who were more *tender-conscienced*, or at least more *tender-hearted*, than himself, he put on the grave Pretence of *seeking God in Prayer* upon so important an Occasion, and the mean while dispatched his secret Orders, that the fatal Blow might be timely and securely given; which was such a *Prophanation of Prayer*, and such a Solemnity added to Murder, as no *Pharisee* could ever out-do, and hardly any *History* can parallel.

But to return to the *Pharisees*, whom we have already found guilty of some of the heinousst Instances of *Hypocrisy*, if we proceed to examine them in other Particulars, they will still lay liable to the Imputation, though

SERM.II. not in the most culpable Degree of it. For  
 even where they had no formed Design of *Mischief*, or no *flagrant Wickedness* at least to carry concealed under the *Vizard* of Religion, they still appear to be intolerably vain and presumptuous, Justifiers of themselves, greedy of the *Applause of Men*, more than the Praise of God, *Trumpeters* to their own *Alms*, Proclaimers of their own Fasts, rash and hasty in judging others, but blind at home, and backward in reforming themselves, careful to keep the People in profound Ignorance, that they might never want their Admirers, and indefatigable in hunting after *Profelytes*, only to have the Power of their *Purses*, and to make them an Accession to their own Party, and the like. Nay and even where they pretended to the greatest Scrupulosity, as in *paying Tithe of Mint, Anise, and Cummin*, their Obedience was miserably lame notwithstanding, for in *straining at a Gnat they swallowed a Camel*, and omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, *Judgment, Mercy, and Faith*.

Upon the whole, after all their *gilded Pretences*, and boasted Advances towards Perfection above others; they were apparently defective



defective in some of the main Branches of <sup>SERM.II.</sup> Piety and Probity, even with the most favourable Allowances that can be made to them.

And this we have from the unerring Judgment of him who was able to look through the beautiful outside of these *whited Sepulchres*, and to descry the Filth and Rottenness that was contained within. For the Particulars of the foregoing Charge are all of them fetch'd from the vi. vii. xv. xvi. and xxiii. Chapters of Saint *Matthew*, and other Passages in the *Evangelists*, that are sufficiently known, and need not be quoted at large.

Nor need I add any farther concerning the Nature of *Hypocrisy*, and the Manners of the *Hypocrite* after so authentick a Testimony. But yet perhaps it may not be unacceptable to hear how the *Pharisees*, those masterly *Hypocrites*, are characterized by *Josephus*, himself both a *Jew* and a *Pharisee*. But in the Quality of an *Historian* he tells us frankly, that "there lived in his Days a Sort or *Seet* of Men, wondrous well-conceited of themselves, for their exact and rigorous Observation of the Law; through which pretended Sanctity and seeming holy Perfection, they had thoroughly possessed and

SERM. II.

“ wound themselves into the great Favour  
 “ and Good-Liking of the Ladies and Cour-  
 “ tiers, who, *good Souls*, imagined that by  
 “ favouring and countenancing them, they  
 “ should do God good Service, and merit  
 “ well at his Hands. They were called by  
 “ the Name of *Pharisees*, Men of great Re-  
 “ putation, and Interest, and Power with  
 “ the Populace; insomuch as they durst con-  
 “ test it, and stand in Opposition against  
 “ *Kings*. Politicians they were of great Judg-  
 “ ment, and deep Reach and Foresight more  
 “ than ordinary; most excellent at framing  
 “ and laying of *Schemes* and Projects at a  
 “ great Distance, and very dextrous in catch-  
 “ ing at an Advantage to hurt those they  
 “ hated.” With more to the same Purpose.  
 Which I cite only to shew, that we have the  
 domestick Evidence of a *Partizan* of their  
 own *Set*, not at all disagreeing with the  
 Account that is given of them in the *Gos-  
 pel*, but adding indeed some Particulars that  
 are not much to their Credit.

*Secondly*, I hasten now in the second Place  
 to represent to you the heinous Aggravations  
 with which this Sin of *Hypocrisy* is attended,  
 that so ye may abhor and detest it. But

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But in this I shall be so much the briefer, SERM. II.  
because in the large Description that you have  
had of it already, and seen exemplified in  
the *Pharisee's* Practice, you can't but perceive  
that the Burden of its Guilt is indeed very  
*heavy and grievous to be born.*

But the Aggravations that it seems to be  
most loaded with, I conceive may be these  
three, *viz.* 1<sup>st</sup>, That it perverts and corrupts  
the very Nature and Design of Religion.  
2<sup>dly</sup>, That it gives great Occasion of Scandal  
in the World. 3<sup>dly</sup>, That it is a most di-  
rect, impudent, and daring Affront to Al-  
mighty God.

1<sup>st</sup>, And first, I say, it plainly perverts  
and corrupts the very Nature and Design  
of Religion. For *God is a Spirit, a pure*  
*and immaculate Spirit*, and ought to be wor-  
*shipped* in a Manner that is suitable to his  
most holy and heavenly Majesty, *i. e. in*  
*Spirit and in Truth*: It is the Sincerity and  
Integrity of the Heart that he chiefly requires  
and regards; and he accepts of outward Pro-  
fessions, and bodily Reverences, and other  
such like Testimonies, no otherwise than as  
they bespeak the inward Sense of the Mind,  
and flow from a fervent and unfeigned Af-  
fection;

SERM. II. fection; of which he himself is the immediate  
 ~~~~~ Discerner.

But now *Hypocrisy* quite inverts the Order of Things that God has fixed and established for ever: It makes Religion to consist of meer out-side, and turns the Worship of God into *Pomp* and *Pageantry*. In a Word, it offers him no better than an *heartless Sacrifice*, which in his pure and *all-seeing Eyes* must needs be a perfect Abomination.

And whereas the End and Intent of all Religion is, *to give to God the Glory due unto his Name*, *Hypocrisy* steps in with a *sacrilegious* Design to divert the Praise from God, and assume it to herself.

And in this respect, however officious she would be thought in her Attendance upon religious Duties, she is in Truth but gratifying herself all the while, and not serving of God; and the Action she employs herself about (what relation soever it may bear to God's Service) is no longer holy, but profane. For Instance, the *Alms-giving* of the *Hypocrite*, when once he has *sounded his Trumpet*, to give Notice of it; and his *Fasting*, when once he has *disfigured his Face, to be seen of Men*, do both degenerate into *Ostentation* and *Vain-Glory*. And

And therefore *Hypocrisy* is fitly here compared to *Leaven* by our Saviour, not only as it tends to *puff Men* up with Pride, but as it taints and infects all, even their best Performances. Religion is no longer Religion, nor Morality Morality, when once it comes to be unhallowed by the *Hypocrite's* perverse and corrupt Practice of it.

2dly, Another Aggravation that lies very heavy upon *Hypocrisy* is, that it gives great Occasion of Scandal in the World. It were a superfluous Thing to go about nicely to determine whether of the two is most mischievous, and most scandalous, open *Profaneness*, or *Hypocrisy*, which is but *Profaneness* in Disguise. For tho' open and avow'd *Profaneness* may seem to be the more impudent and unrestrained Transgressor of the two; yet *Hypocrisy* is by no means such a puny, *shamefaced Sin* as might be imagined (the contrary will appear under the next Article.) To be sure it wants not Confidence and Hardiness enough, when arrived to a Height to break through the most sacred Laws of God and Man.

And though it chuses to wear a Disguise for Conveniency, yet that Disguise is often too

transparent to hide its Deformities: And if at any Time the *Mask* drops off, and the foul Imposture is detected (as 'tis great Odds but at one time or other it will) then *Hypocrisy* may e'en joyn Hands with *Prophaneness*, as giving equal Matter of Offence, and promoting jointly the Work of the *Devil*.

For besides that, it may stagger the *weak*, and mislead the *unwary*, who may chance to think themselves sufficiently warranted to follow the *Example* of such *sanctify'd Pretenders*. I say, besides this Hazard, it would certainly administer Occasion to the Libertines to *blaspheme*, and to harden themselves in their Profligate Courses.

Yes, would they be apt to say, it is even as we thought; Religion is that *stale Sham* we took it for. It is but the *Engine* of *Ambition* and *Avarice*; or an Invention of the subtle few, to awe the rest of the World, and fright them from those Freedoms and Pleasures, that the chief *Actors* would fain reserve to themselves behind the *Curtain*; for in proper Place we find the *demurest Hypocrite* of them all can make a Shift to be as wicked as our selves.

And

the Leaven of the Pharisees.

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And thus the Honour of God's Name is ^{IMRES.} wounded, and the Truth of Religion attack'd, and the *Gainsayers* and *Blasphemers* confirmed in their Obstinacy, through the Sides of the *Phantome Hypocrisy*. A grievous Offence this, *but woe unto that Man by whom the Offence cometh.*

3dly, The last and highest Aggravation of the Sin of *Hypocrisy* is, that it is a direct, impudent, and daring Affront to the God of Heaven.

For the *Hypocrite*, though he frequently usurps the Name of God, and treads his holy Courts, and perhaps not without some Sense of Religion, yet his religious Thoughts, if any such perchance should arise, are so mixed and adulterated with other baser Aims and Ends, yet his pretended and servile Homage is no better at last than a real Profanation, as was before observed.

And to put God off with empty Shews and Pretences of Devotion, without any hearty Affection, is to *mock* him, instead of *honouring* him, which is an Affront with a Witness.

But then the more consummate the *Hypocrite* is, the more insolent and audacious the Affront. For to commit all manner of Outrages,

SERM. II. rages, and protect all manner of Vices, under the Banner of Religion, is in Effect to fight against God, and to dispute with him about his Being, with all the *Effrontery* of *Atheism* itself; at least it amounts by strong Implication, to a Denial of his omniscient Inspection into Mens Hearts, or a Defiance of his Almighty Power. He seems to have said in his Heart, like him in the *Psalmist*, *Tush, God hath forgotten; he hideth his Face, and will never see it* (*Psal. x. 11.*) nor require it, and therefore he goes on boldly and contemptuously to *cast his Laws behind him*, and trample upon his sacred Authority. Which is so daring an *Insult*, that it may well be thought sufficient to provoke God's severest Vengeance, both in this World, and that which is to come.

And to make Men the more apprehensive of this Danger, the Scripture is full of terrible Threats and Denunciations against such graceless Offenders. *The Hypocrite*, we read, *shall heap up Wrath* (*Job xxxvi. 13.*) *and that Fearfulness shall surprize them in the Day of Calamity* (*Isaiah xxxiii. 14.*) *that their Hope shall perish, and be cut off, and their Trust be like a Spider's Web.* (*Job viii. 13, 14.*)

14.) as easily broke to Pieces when God SERM. II. thinks fit to distress them, as it was seen through before, when they were disguising themselves with all their Cunning.

In one Word, *Woe, Woe, Woe*, nothing but *Woe* is denounced against them for a whole Chapter together in Saint *Matthew's Gospel*, and the *Damnation of Hell* is reserved to be their Portion for ever.

And this may suffice to convince us, how heinous and hateful a Sin *Hypocrisy* is. I hasten again,

Thirdly, Now in the third Place to set before you some of the most distinguishing Marks, by which it usually discovers itself, that so ye may be in the less Danger of deceiving your selves, or being deceived by it. But here it would be tedious to be too particular. I shall therefore only select some of the most remarkable Tokens by which it may at any time be easily distinguished. And

1st, Self-Justification and Self-Appause is one shrewd Sign of an *hypocritical* Heart. For this is exactly to write after the *supercilious Pharisees* Copy, who loved to compare themselves

SERM. II. selves with themselves, or rather with those
 that they thought infinitely inferior to themselves, *thanking God, that they were not as other Men, Extortioners, unjust Adulterers (Luke xviii. 11.)* but as the wise Man says, *there is a Generation that is pure in their own Eyes, and yet is not washed from their Filthiness.* (Prov. xxx. 12.) For Men may abstain from some of the more notorious and scandalous Vices, and yet indulge themselves in others that are equally damnable, though more easily varnish'd over perhaps, or concealed in the Crowd. Such as are Covetousness, Pride, Malice, Envy or the like.

And there is no surer Indication of some secret Corruption lurking in the Heart, than a vain and swelling Conceit of a Man's own Righteousness; for the sincere and upright Soul is always abased in his own Eyes, he will not, he dare not impose such a Deceit upon himself, as to say, *that he has no Sin,* and make God the Liar; nor will he affect to be thought more holy than his Neighbours.

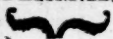
2dly, A great Forwardness to judge and condemn others, without the like Severity towards one's self, is another suspicious Sign

the Leaven of the Pharisees.

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of Insincerity and *Hypocrisy*. For though SERM. II.
'tis possible for a Man to be of this censorious
Temper, and at the same time not altogether
insincere in his Profession of Religion, yet it
must be owned, that his apparent want of
Charity is a very great Defect; and it were to
be expected, if he be indeed an honest Man,
that he should first look at home, where he
is principally concerned, and take care to
reform what he finds there amiss. But if,
whilst he sets up himself for a *Censor* and
Corrector of others, he discovers as many and
gross Failings of his own, which he most
indulgently overlooks; then is the *Hypocrite*
plainly detected, and the unreformed Reformer
owes himself a Shame in being so officious
to pull the *Mote out of his Brother's Eye*,
blind, as he is, with a *Beam in his own*.

3dly, The Prostitution of Religion to mean
and mercenary Ends, is another unquestion-
able Evidence against the *Hypocrite*. For
the Man whose Heart is right and stedfast
towards God will prefer his Religion before
all other Interests whatsoever; but he that
makes it subservient to every little secular De-
sign, betrays a corrupt Conscience, and shews
that he puts on Religion only as a *Gloak*, not
for

SERM. II. for God's sake, but for his own. And such
 are all those who can change their Religion as the *Wind of Profit* blows, or the *Tide of Fashion* turns, who can jump from one Side to another purely upon the Prospect of gaining a rich Wife, or procuring a Trade, or the like. Such again are those who adhere to this or that *separate Sect of Religion*, and make a *Rent in God's Church*, upon the low Inducement of being esteemed the chief *Rabbies* of the Parties, and will neither come in themselves, nor suffer the People to enter in, for fear of lessening the Harvest of their own Gain.

I judge no Man, but 'tis fit every one should judge himself, and if there be any that upon the Scrutiny should find, that he has indeed acted with such oblique Views, and been guided by such unstable Principles, sure I am, that even his own Conscience cannot acquit him of *Hypocrisy* in the sight of God.

Fourthly, Another never-failing Mark of a hauling *Hypocrite* is an Inequality and Inconsistency of Conduct; that is to say, when a Man shall sanctimoniously pretend to the greatest Elevations of Piety, and make more

than ordinary *Parade* in performing his De-^{SERM.II.}votions, and yet live in the open Neglect of common Justice and Charity, when he shall *wipe his Mouth, and say, I am no Drunkard, nor Adulterer*, and yet can cherish in himself the *Liar* and *Extortioner*; when he shall be full of his *Scruples* in one Case, and yet free from them in another of more than equal Importance; *strain* perhaps and *keck* at the Imposition of an indifferent Ceremony, and yet *swallow* the Sin of *Schism*, and *wipe his Mouth*, and say, why what Harm in't? Or, to name but one Instance more, when a Man shall be scrupulous, and not scrupulous about the same thing, by Fits and Seasons; scrupulous of receiving the Lord's Supper this Year in a Posture of kneeling, and not scrupulous, as it may happen, next Year, though his Doubts and Exceptions remain the same. These, I say, and such Inconsistencies as these, can hardly be supposed to dwell together in a *single Heart*. No! they smell Rank of *Hypocrisy*, especially when 'tis notorious, that the Man can bring his flexible Conscience to Compliance at any time for his Advantage; when the Man, to qualify himself for an Office, can come most readily to the *Lord's Table*,

SERM. II. *Table*, where he was seldom or never seen before, and intends not to be seen again till the like fair Opportunity shall once more suspend his Scruples, and invite him to be a Communicant.

And thus I have gone through my intended Method, and given you first a general *Idea* of the Sin of *Hypocrisy*. And then some Account of the special Aggravations with which it comes attended; and lastly, I have suggested to you some of the most obvious Marks by which it may be distinguish'd and detected.

I only crave your Patience for a very few Words to apply what has been said to the proper Uses; which are but these two; that is, to observe our Saviour's Caution in the Text, and *beware of this Leaven*, 1st, In our selves, that we be not infected with it. 2^{dly}, In others, that we be not imposed upon by it.

1st, And first let us *beware of it* in our selves, that we be not infected with it.

For this *Leaven* is of a subtle and insinuating Nature, and diffuses itself insensibly, and where it once prevails, it darkens the Understanding, and *hoodwinks* the Conscience, and makes us the greatest Strangers at home, even

to our own *deceitful Hearts*. And therefore it will behove us, to awaken our Reflection, whilst 'tis in our Power, and examine ourselves impartially by the Rules last given, and demand a direct Answer, whether our Hearts are not secretly puffed up with spiritual Pride? Whether Vain-Glory is not apt to intermingle with our fairest Actions, and profane our very Devotions? Whether we do not betake our selves to the *Pharisaical* Diversion of judging others, only to ward off the Suspicion from our selves, and set up for Reformers, though we hate to be reformed? Whether we do not force our Religion at all Turns to truckle to Interest, Policy, and Power, and adhere to the Service of *Mammon*, rather than that of God? And whether we do not act an inconsistent Part, observing this or that Instance of our Duty to day, without any hearty Compliance, and neglecting the same to morrow, without any Shame or Conscience?

And if upon a serious Self-Examination we find any of these suspicious Tokens upon our selves, we may conclude, that all is not sound within, and we must not lift up lofty Eyes, elevated with the Conceit of our own

VOL. VII. E Sanctity,

SERM. II. Sanctity, but rather with the abased *Publican*, smite upon our Breasts, and say, God be merciful to us that are Sinners, even *Hypocrites*, the vilest of Sinners. Purge us, O Lord, from this Leaven, create a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within us, that we may be enabled to present our selves, our Souls, as well as Bodies, a lively, holy, reasonable, and acceptable Sacrifice. But

2dly, We ought also to beware of this Leaven of Hypocrisy in others, that we be not imposed upon by it.

For if we do in good earnest endeavour to maintain a good Conscience, and preserve the Innocence of the Dove, it were great Pity we should be exposed the mean while a naked Prey to the Subtlety of the Serpent.

Christian Simplicity is not, ought not to be so much a Stranger to common Foresight as that comes to: The very Caution of the Text teaches us the contrary Lesson. And indeed since we live in the midst of a crooked Generation, it will behove us to look well to our Steps. For the *Hypocrite* is a very designing and insinuating Creature, and hath this particular Property of the Serpent, that he is very sharp-sighted to spy an Advantage, and like

the Leaven of the Pharisees.

51

like him too *slily creepeth out of the Hedge*, SERM.II.
unobserved, and *biteth the heedless Passenger*
by the Heel. And indeed it is not reason-
able to be expected, that he that prevaricates
with God, should be faithful to Man; nor
would any one, I presume, that is will-advis'd
make choice of the *Hypocrite* from his *Ca-*
suist, his Guide, or his Governor.

When therefore 'tis notorious to observe,
that the same Men can *send forth sweet Wa-*
ter and bitter out of the same Fountain; *Bles-*
sing and Cursing out of the same Mouth. When
they can boast aloud of Meekness, Modera-
tion, and Catholick Charity, and yet at the
same time revile and blaspheme, and rend
the very Bowels of that Church which they
condescend to communicate with upon some
inviting Occasions. I say, when we observe
this strange Contrariety between Men's Pro-
fessions and Actions, common Prudence will
tell us, if we have any Value for our Reli-
gion, that these are not the Men that are the
fittest to be *Guardians* to our *Constitution*; nor
can it be imagined, sure, that the greater
their Power, the greater would be our Secu-
rity. I dare undertake to say, that most
Men are *wiser in their Generation*, than to

SERM. II. commit a Child or an Estate to any one's Trust upon such slender Assurances of Friendship or fair Dealing. And there I shall leave that Point.

But I must obviate one Objection, that may seem to lie against this whole Discourse. For why, may it be said, why so very severe against *Hypocrisy and the Hypocrite*? and why with such particular Views and Aims? I answer truly and candidly, my Aim is at *Hypocrisy* in general where-ever the flagrant Signs of it appear, and at the *Hypocrite* of what Denomination soever: I aim at none more directly but who have the indisputable Mark upon them, and whom Friends and Foes will both condemn for such.

And who is there that will stand up to make Apology for such an *Hypocrite*? Who indeed can be displeased to see the *Hypocrite* unmask'd, unless it be the *Hypocrite* himself? And for him, 'tis better perhaps that he should be displeased: The Prospect of his own Face in a true Glass may possibly give him some Dislike of his own Deformities, it may bring him to some Sense and Abhorrence of his Sin, and stir him up to a sincere Repentance and serious Humiliation. And if,

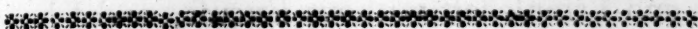
if, by God's good Grace, it should have this ^{SERM. II.} happy Effect upon him, I doubt not but he would easily be reconciled to one who had offended him only by telling him so useful and seasonable a Truth. In the mean time, I am sufficiently assured that I have set nothing before you this Day but the *unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Truth*; and in so doing, whether it be palatable or not, I should hope that I have recommended my self to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God. And I am ready to commend you again to God's Blessing, only adding that well-weighed Advice of the Son of *Sirach*, (Eccl. v. 9, 10, &c.) *Winnow not with every Wind, and go not into every Way; for so doth the Sinner that hath a double Tongue. Be stedfast in thy Understanding, and let thy Word be the same, and let thy Life be sincere.*

Now to God the Father, &c.



S E R M O N I I I .

Of Christian Love, with its genuine
Properties.



ROMANS xii. 9.

Let Love be without Dissimulation.

SOME of the Schools define Charity ^{SER. III.} to be *a Love of God for his own sake,* and *a Love of our Neighbour for God's sake.* According to which Definition this short Precept of Saint Paul's is at once directed against Hypocrisy in Religion, and Hypocrisy in Friendship. Between which two there is much Affinity and Resemblance. For Hypocrisy in Religion is a specious Appearance of great Sanctity, without any real

E 4 Goodness,

SER. III. Goodness, or without the most genuine Fruits of it. And Hypocrisy in Friendship is a fair Profession of much Kindness, without any hearty good Meaning, or any of the solid Effects of it. The Hypocrite in the former Sense acts the Part of the strictest Saint, and yet is a secret Sinner. The Hypocrite in the latter Sense would personate the faithful Friend, and is but a false Fawner. The former was openly arraigned in the last Discourse that I was able to preach among you; and I think left without Excuse, and I hope without an Advocate.

The Cause of the latter now comes on, which is altogether as indefensible as the other, and I believe can hardly find a Patron. For how slight or superficial soever Men may venture to be in the Service of God, no Man, I dare say, would be willing to be served himself only with flattering Words and feign'd Pretences. And if no Man would have his *Friend* to be a *Hypocrite*, 'tis plain, no Man ought to be a Hypocrite to his Friend.

Which is the short Decision of this whole Case, according to that most equitable Rule of *doing as we would be done by*.

But

But because Diffimulation is so cunning SER. III! and so plausible an Actor in the World, and Charity it self is often so speciously counterfeited, that without Attention it is not easy to detect it, I shall therefore pursue this Argument more at large, and put the Difference between that which is true and that which is sophisticate.

And to this End I shall,

First, Give you a Description of *Christian* Love or Charity, together with some of its most eminent Acts and Properties, by which you will see, as we go along, what an amiable Virtue it is of itself, and how much it is depraved, when 'tis mingled with Diffimulation. And

Secondly, I shall give you a Prospect of the Vice of Diffimulation, according to the various Shapes it puts on, and as 'tis practised by several Artists, that so ye may learn both to abhor their Practices, and to avoid their Snares.

First, And first I shall give you a Description of *Christian* Love or Charity, with some of its most eminent Acts and Properties, &c.
And

SER. III.

And *Christian* Love or Charity consists in a hearty Good-Will and Affection to our Brethren, suitably and seasonably expressing it self by real Acts of Kindness and Beneficence; and *all* in Obedience to God's holy Will, and out of a thankful Sense of his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ.

I say, it consists in a hearty Good-Will and Affection to our Brethren; *i. e.* indeed to all Men. For there is a Sort of natural Proximity or Kindred betwixt all Mankind, that will hardly suffer them to be Strangers, that can never dispose them to be Enemies to each other: So far from that, that it rather strongly inclines them, if they will either follow the Propensities of Nature, or consult their own mutual Advantage, to live and love together, as Neighbours, Friends and Brethren.

And as the Foundation of brotherly Love is thus happily laid in Nature, so the Superstructure is wisely carried on by God's Providence, and perfected by his Grace.

For the same Power and Providence that first made Men sociable Creatures, has constantly taken Care to hold them together in Society;

Society ; the Helps and Comforts of which SER. III.
do carry perpetual Endearments along with
them, and are a Cement not easy to be dissolved.

But when to all this, the spiritual Alliance of *Christians* is superadded, and their Fellowship in Christ their common Head, that's the most sacred and indissoluble Bond of Union, that's it that constitutes a Charity truly *Christian* and divine.

This is the very Essence of true *Christian* Charity, and these the Springs upon which it moves ; and it moves in so vast a Compass, that it excludes none from its Benevolence ; none that partake of the same common Nature ; none with whom it has any kind of Intercourse ; none to whom it can be any ways beneficial.

And though in some certain Instances it may possibly (and justly enough) be determined to one Object rather than another, upon the Score of nearer Relation, or more pressing Necessity, or greater Merit ; yet it will generously extend itself as far as ever it is able, and vigorously exert itself in all the good Offices it can find any Opportunity for, never contenting itself with meer verbal Professions,
and

SER. III. and empty Promises of Kindness, never confining itself within the narrow Circle of Self-Interest, never totally debarring any from its Favour, though it bestows the largest Share upon those that are best deserving.

In a Word, it is always clear, undissembled, liberal, diffusive, and in all respects acts worthy of itself, as being always influenced by a lively Sense of God's marvellous Love manifested to us in giving us his only begotten Son, and our indispensable Obligation to make this easy Return to him at least ; and since he so loved us, to love one another fervently and unfeignedly, out of Deference both to his Command and to his Example.

Hitherto I have presented you with a general Description of *Christian Love* or Charity, which you can't but perceive, is adorned with native Beauties and Excellencies of its own, which are not to be reached by the Dissembler's best Art and Skill. Now you shall see how it acquits itself in its proper Exercise, by which it will farther appear, how ill it sorts with Diffimulation, and how awkward a Performer Diffimulation is when she pretends to imitate this heavenly Virtue.

Which

Which cannot be seen to better Advantage SER. III.
than in that admirable Character of Charity
which Saint *Paul* himself gives us in the 13th
Chapter of the 1st Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

Charity, says he, *suffereth long, and is kind,*
i. e. it is so far from giving Scope to a hasty
Revenge, that it bears all manner of Injuries,
so long as they are any ways tolerable, and
treats even an Adversary with Humanity and
Courtesy, and endeavours to win upon him,
by the surprizing Returns of real Kindness,
which must, if any thing, mollify and melt
him, and perfectly *overcome Evil with Good*.

And will Diffimulation *suffer long, and be*
kind too? Yes, she will suffer as long as it is
for her Interest, and smother her Resentments,
when 'tis in vain to express them; but for be-
ing really courteous and kind to an Adversary,
she makes so little Distinction betwixt Friend
and Foe, that she knows no more how to be
tender to the latter, than she does how to be
faithful or grateful to the former.

Charity envieth not. It grieves not, it re-
pines not at the good Fortune and Success of
others; but on the contrary, finds a sensible
Pleasure to see an honest Man thrive, or a
Man of Merit rewarded,

SER. III.

Whereas Diffimulation adores and idolizes the Great upon any Terms, but delights not, desires not to find them good as they are great, lest their Virtue should be Proof against the Impressions of her false Flattery.

Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. It scorns to raise an unjust Reputation upon the Diminution or Ruin of another Man's; it never uses any Man with Insolence or Contempt, but tenders every one's good Name as a thing altogether as precious as 'tis brittle, and will rather chuse to pay any Body more Respect than he deserves, than rob him of any Part of that which is his Due.

But Diffimulation makes free with People's Reputation at all Adventures. For the Diffsembler is a *Sycophant* and false Accuser by Trade; and he does not care whom he lessens, or vilifies, so he can but appear any thing considerable himself, particularly in the Opinion of the Person or Party that he is immediately practising upon.

Charity behaveth not itself unseemly. It always keeps a just Mean, and maintains a due *Decorum*; disdaining at all times to stoop to any thing that is base or dishonourable, and yet thinking no Office too mean, no Con-
descension

defension too great, to purchase Peace and Good-Will, so it may be had without Prejudice to Truth or Justice. SER. III.

But here Diffimulation over-acts her Part, and strains a Point beyond what virtuous Friendship can require, or *Christianity* will brook; submitting to any the most servile Compliance, and any the vilest Drudgery, rather than lose the Countenance of those whom she courts, and hopes to cozen.

Charity seeketh not her own. She makes not private Interest the sole Standard of Right and Wrong, and chief Aim and Scope of all her Actions; nay she will not so much as suffer her own petty Concernments once to come in Competition with the Publick Weal, or the greater Good of any Friend or Neighbour.

Whereas Diffimulation is altogether wrapped up in Self-Interest, measuring every thing by that Rule, and steering always by that Star, exchanging old Friends for new, and betraying both old and new, and veering with every Wind, only to compass this little fordid End.

Charity is not easily provoked; not subject to sudden Transports, never to any violent

Excesses

SER. III.  Excesses of Anger, much less to the *Leaven* of Malice and Bitterness; but in spite of all Provocations, she still preserves her Temper, her Candour and her Innocence.

And here Dissimulation puts on the Disguise of a smooth Tongue, and a smiling Countenance: She contains her Anger, and keeps it in for a time, but 'tis to let it loose with the greater Fury, as Men chain up their *Mastiffs* to make them the fiercer. And though her Kindness be but pretended, her Malice is surely real, and so it will shew itself, when once things are ripe for Execution.

Charity thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth. She beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. She takes no Pleasure in finding Fault, even when she is able to make good the Charge, and perhaps obliged so to do. But to hear a false Accusation disproved, and the innocent happily vindicated, is such a seasonable Discovery of Truth, as is indeed Matter of Rejoicing to her. She bears with People's Failings and Infirmities, and is willing to conceal them too, so far as may consist with their real Good,

Good, or conduce to their Amendment. She ^{SER. III.} judges always on the favourable Side, and believes the best where there is but the least Colour for it; and if there is none, she would gladly hope the best still, even against Probability. But if the Guilt be notorious and undeniable, she will still entertain good Hope of the Party's Repentance, she will pursue it with her earnest Wishes and Endeavours, and never finally despair of it, so long as there remains but any Possibility.

This is the Tenderneſs that Charity always proceeds with on theſe Occaſions. But Diſſimulation has no Bowels of this Sort, no inward Concern for any Body's real Good. And therefore ſhe applies herſelf rather to ſooth People in their Sins than to make them truly ſenſible of them. She induſtriouſly hides the Sinner from himſelf, that ſhe may have the Pleaſure of cenſuring and expoſing him to others, and reap the Praise of being the Animadverter and Discoverer. In ſhort, ſhe will pretend to *bear, believe, hope, endure all things* for her own Advantage, but 'tis never out of any Regard to the Perſon moſt concerned, nor with any charitable Intentions towards him.

SER. III.  And thus you have had a pretty full View of *Christian* Charity, together with several of the good Properties in which she manifestly excells, by which you see how amiable a Virtue it is of itself, and how much it is depraved, when 'tis mingled with Diffimulation, which is in every respect so unlike it, and indeed so incompatible with it. I proceed now,

Secondly, To give you a Prospect of the Vice of Diffimulation, according to the several Shapes it puts on, as it is practised by several *Artists*, that so ye may learn both to abhor their Practices, and to avoid their Snares.

You have already seen a good many of its Deformities by its being placed still as we passed along, in Opposition to true Charity, and shewn upon that disadvantageous Comparison. All that I shall need to do further, is only to trace it thro' the artificial Doublings and Windings of those dextrous Dissemblers, whom we ordinarily meet with in our daily Conversation. And these may be reduced to about three Sorts.

1st, The first is a ceremonious, complaisant, good-natured Man, as he affects to be thought,
that

that can bring himself to concur with any Opinion, suit himself to any Humour, strike in with any kind of Conversation, rather than create the Trouble of a Contradiction to the Company: If any Body is commended in his Hearing, he is presently full of his Admiration, and large in his Applause: If any Body is censured, he shakes his Head immediately, and throws in his Suffrage of Condemnation: For he has too much Civility and Courtesy, and knows the Value of Friendship too well, to disagree with any Body he converses with. And if he should happen to fall in with those to-day, that have quite contrary Sentiments to his yesterday's Companions, he makes no Difficulty to accommodate that Matter.

He may indeed find himself obliged to change an out-dated Opinion of Yesterday, but his Address and Management is still the same, altogether complying and consenting with those that are present.

Now 'tis obvious to observe of such a Man as this, that he has too much Flexibility, Levity, and Unsteadiness, to be a fast and real Friend.

SER. III.

And indeed he that so servilely endeavours to appear friendly to every Body, has seldom the Luck to be thought faithful by any Body. Nor is it possible he should be so upon any virtuous Principle: For he that is always obsequious, is too obsequious to be honest; and such an implicate, undistinguishing Complaisance must, at some time or other, be prejudicial to Truth and Justice.

And though we should allow the Man to have no formed Design of Malice against any Body, yet the Manner of his Conversation is very mischievous. For, according to the Rules of his unlimited Complaisance, he must frequently gratify and please his present Friends at the Expence of those that are absent. And his very Temper and Customs will dispose him to carry fresh Tales, and tell acceptable News still where he goes.

And the Words of the *Tale-bearer*, how oily soever they may seem, the *Wise-Man* says (*Prov. xviii. 8.*) *are as Wounds, and go into the innermost Parts of the Belly*; Wounds that give the Reputation a secret Stab, and are often fatal to People's Peace.

2dly, Another Sort of Dissembler, with which the World is much pester'd, is the fawning

fawning Flatterer, whose mercenary Tongue makes pleasing Musick to Men's corrupt Passions, but 'tis always an Instrument of Deceit, and leads the unwary into very unhappy Mistakes.

His Business is to make himself exceeding gracious with every one, whose Acquaintance is likely to prove gainful to him; and for that Reason he is always, if he can, an officious Retainer to the great, the wealthy, and the powerful, before whom he constantly presents himself as an humble Admirer, and a most obedient Serviteur.

And if he can, by this Means, recommend himself to any Degree of Trust or Confidence with them, he never fails to make all possible Proof of his Obsequiousness and Diligence, tho' it be at the Price of his Honesty and his Conscience. For his grand Maxim is, to please and to oblige at any Rate. And to this End he studies the Complexion, the Habits, the Manners, the Customs, and all the Inclinations and Appetites of his *Patron*, with all which in their Turns he is resolved to be a punctual Complyer.

He extols his Virtues, if he is reputed virtuous, beyond all Reason and Measure;

SER. III. he tickles his Vanity, if *there* he be liable to Impression, with perpetual Praises; he palliates his Vices, if that be a proper Part, with the most specious Colours; or if they are not to be palliated, he assumes to himself a Share in them, by undertaking the wretched Task of being a Minister to them.

And this *versatile* Part he acts as long as he can pass undiscovered, as long at least as Fortune smiles upon his *Patron*: For if Fortune once begins to frown, he is neither Friend nor Flatterer any longer, but one of the earliest, in all Likelihood, that will turn Deserter.

This is the Flatterer's known Character, a Character of itself so notorious and so odious, that I need not observe to you, that he is a most perfidious Traitor, under the Cloak of Friendship; the worst of Enemies indeed under that Disguise, because he industriously keeps a Man, all that lies in him, a Stranger to himself, and to all Modesty and genuine Virtue, and betrays him into most pernicious Errors, and takes unconscionable Rewards for his very Treachery.

And 'tis not easy indeed to say what a World of Mischief Flattery makes in publick

as well as private; for though it be but a sneaking, creeping Vice, yet it has the Boldness to insinuate even into Courts and Palaces, and is always lurking there as a Spy and a Deceiver. And if it can be so unhappy as to gain Admittance into an ambitious-given Monarch's Presence or Cabinet, there it is in its proper Province; there it pours out all its sweetest Incense, and draws forth all its richest Colours, and lays them on promiscuously and profusely; it changes the Name (and fain it would the Nature of Things) *calling Evil Good, and Good Evil*, making Burning, Plundering, Persecuting, and Dragooning, to pass for noble Atchievements; and the Falsification of solemn Treaties, for a distinguishing Mark of Greatness, and an Exaltation above the common Rules and Measures of Faith and Honour. And when a flattering Mouth can be secure of a Prince's Ear, whenever it offers such Suggestions as these, then, as *Solomon* says (*Prov. xxvi. 28.*) *it worketh Ruin*, Ruin to whole Families, Cities, Countries, Continents, witness the enterprizing Reign of our formidable Neighbour of *France*, who was flattered into an Opinion that Victory was chained to his Chariot

F 4

Wheels,

SER. III. Wheels, till the *English* Arms of late proved
 him to be vincible,

But to return from this Digression.

3dly, There is a third sort of Dissembler, too frequent among us, for whom I want a proper Name that is bad enough. But he is one, who with many fair Speeches, and great Semblance of Friendship, and abundance of Compassion and Charity, would fain persuade you to think well of him, and to put Confidence in him; and yet he is so far from meaning well to you, that he makes use of this specious Cover, the more effectually to undermine you, e're you apprehend your Danger, or think of any Prevention. Which sort of Practicer is exactly characterized in those apposite Words of *Solomon*, *He that bateth, dissembleth with his Lips, and layeth up Deceit within him: When he speaketh fair, believe him not: For there are seven Abominations in his Heart.* (Prov. xxvi. 24, 25.) Which though he may studiously endeavour to conceal, yet some Indications will go nigh to appear; for where there is Rancour harboured at the bottom of the Heart, 'tis hard to act this studied Part without some faltering in the Speech; and though a Man con-
 trives

trives to make his *Words softer than Oil*, yet the Overflowings of Gall will mingle insensibly, and make them sometimes *as sharp as a two-edged Sword*. And therefore, though Charity, Moderation, Meekness, Forbearance, &c. be Names that signify excellent Things, yet it is not the Sound alone that should charm us, without the Substance of the Virtues themselves, or any visible Effect of them. Nor is it always to be credited, that those Men are most exemplary in the Practice of these Virtues, that make the loudest Boast of it: Especially when their fair Pretences evidently bewray their own Falshood. As for Instance, to hear a Man solemnly lamenting the great Want of Charity in the World, particularly in those from whom he loves to distinguish himself; and to hear him in the same Breath expressing himself in the most reproachful Terms, and with all the Fierceness and Bitterness imaginable; I say, that Man's ill-counterfeited Tenderness is a manifest Proof of his own real Uncharitableness, what Reason soever he might have to charge it upon his Adversaries. *Thus again*, if a Man will take upon him the plausible Part of recommending Peace and Union, and deploring

SER. III. ploring the sad Effects of civil Dissention and Division, and yet makes it the constant Business of his Life to *stir up Strife and Sedition*, that Man is openly at War with himself; his Professions indeed are peaceable, but his Actions are turbulent and riotous. *Once more*, if a Man under the Notion of a *moderate Dissenter* shall pretend to be an Advocate for the Church, and tell you (as we are often told in Print) that this would be for the Church's Advantage, and that for her Disadvantage, and if the same Man at the same Time shall vent the most virulent Invectives both against the Constitution and Members of this Church; I say, in such a Case, the Man's pretended extraordinary Care and dissembled Love, serve but the more eminently to expose the sour and *schismatical* Spirit whereby he is acted.

And in these and all such Instances as these, where Men's Professions and Actions are visibly at Variance, and the confident Dissembler is still labouring to impose upon People by the smooth Harangues of a double and deceitful Tongue, it is our own Fault if we be so easily gull'd; for no Prudence can advise us, no Charity can oblige us to give Credit

Credit to such an impudent Forgery; nothing SER. III.
indeed can betray us into it, but a foolish
and fatal Credulity, that even the Dissembler
himself, when he has served himself of it,
and wrought our Ruin by it, will insult and
deride.

And now, for what remains, I beseech
you, Brethren, suffer the Word of Exhorta-
tion; and let us all be exhorted to love one
another with a fervent and unfeigned Love:
We more especially that are of *the Household
of Faith*, of that Part of God's Household
which we have abundant Reason to think is
modelled and governed according to his own
Institution and Appointment. Let us, as
becomes us, *love, not in Word, neither in
Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth*. We are
united in Doctrine and Worship, I entreat
you, by the Mercies of Christ, and as you
tender the Peace and Safety of this poor en-
vied Church of his, let us be united in Af-
fection too: Let all bitter Emulations, Ani-
mosities, and Heart-burnings, all causeless
Jealousies, all needless Differences and Dis-
putes, all odious and invidious Marks of Dis-
crimination, be banished for ever from among
us. Let us not any more cast such Fire-
brands at one another in Sport, for the Sport
is

SER. III. is indeed for the *Atheists*, and *Papists*, and all manner of *Separatists*, but 'tis at the eminent Hazard of our present Security, as well as our eternal Salvation.

Oh! Let us all lay these Things seriously to Heart, and let us open our Eyes, if we can, and *see at length the Things that belong unto our Peace, even the Peace of our Jerusalem.* Let us *pray for its Peace*, and promote it. Let us delight to see it *as a City that is built compact in Unity*; and let us endeavour to keep it so, as knowing, that not only its Beauty and Regularity, but even its Strength and Stability, do consist in this very Thing.

To conclude, *let us, whereto we have already attained; let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Thing*, having the same Love, *being of one Accord, of one Mind*; and like the first Converts to *Christianity*, even of one Heart, and of one Soul. So shall the Spirit of Love chuse to take up its Residence with us, and shed abroad its blessed Influences more and more in our Hearts: So shall the God of Peace Delight to dwell among us, and build up a *Wall of Defence* about our *Sion*, that may make it strong and secure within itself, the Glory and Bulwark of the Reformation, and the Joy of the whole Earth. *Amen.* S E R-

S E R M O N IV.

The mischievous Effects of a slanderous Tongue.

PSAL. l. 20.

*Thou sittest and speakest against thy
Brother, thou slanderest thy own
Mother's Son.*

IN the Verse foregoing we have the true SER. IV. Character of a *Lyar*, whose Invention is habitually employ'd in framing Deceit; and whose Tongue stands always ready bent to utter it to the Prejudice of his Neighbour.

And in these Words we have a Description of one of the most malicious and mischievous Sort of *Lyars*; *i. e.* the *Reviler* or the *Slanderer*,

SER. IV. *derer*, whose chief Delight and Business it is to sit and speak against his Brother, to entertain himself at the Expence of his good Name in all Conversations, or rather to sit in Judgment upon him, and condemn him innocent and unheard, upon any false, groundless Accusation, purposely invented, or rashly taken up, or industriously propagated, in order to blast his Reputation. Which is a base and barbarous Practice, and has been always complained of, and always will be, more or less, as long as there is any such Thing as Pride or Peevishness, Envy, or Uncharitableness, to set Men together by the Ears; and make them spiteful and hateful to one another. But certainly this Rage of the Tongue (if I may so apply an apt Expression of the Prophet's, *Hosea* vii. 16.) was never fiercer, never more unbridled than now it is among ourselves; no longer confined to Whispers, or to Corners, it goes forth in Publick to destroy, and spares neither small nor great, in the Fury of its Power. There is no Dignity so high, no Order so sacred, no Innocence so clear, no Merit so conspicuous, but what is boldly and openly arraigned, and as severely sentenced.

of a Slanderous Tongue.

79

And I am afraid People have usurped this SER. IV.
kind of Liberty so long, and 'tis so universal-
ly practised, that it is but lightly set by; it
fits as easy upon the Conscience, as it passes
glibly off the Tongue, and 'tis hardly thought
a Sin, because 'tis so much a Fashion, so gene-
ral and inveterate a Custom.

But the less it is accounted of, the more
needful it is for us, who are to *warn the Peo-
ple of their Sins*, to make them sensible (if
we can) of this, for which they have so
much to answer in particular; that those who
are so apt at all Turns to be Accusers of their
Brethren, may see Reason at last to accuse and
condemn themselves, for being so very inju-
rious and uncharitable. In order to which
I shall make it my present Business; and I
persuade my self, common as this Subject is,
a Discourse upon it will not be reckoned the
less useful for that, so long as the Practice it
self is so much in Use and Countenance.

To obviate therefore, if it may be, the
ill growing Evil, I shall

First, Enquire into the Nature of *Slander*,
and the several Kinds and Degrees of it, and
the usual Arts and Methods of conveying and
dispersing it. And then, *Secondly*,

SER. IV. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to discover the Malignity of this Sin, that I may more effectually dissuade People from indulging a wicked Habit, that is so deservedly odious, and so pernicious.

First, For the Nature of *Slander*: It consists in fastening any wrongful Imputation or Accusation upon a Man, to rob him of his good Name, or of that Esteem which is allowed him, by those who know and converse with him; and whereby chiefly he is enabled to support the Dignity of that Rank which he holds in the World, or to carry on the Business of his Vocation with Success and Advantage; and is therefore doubly hurtful. So that *Slander* implies both evil Speaking, and false Speaking: It is in short a *Lie*, that is detrimental to our Neighbour's Reputation.

And he is a *Slanderer*, and studiously so, who sets himself on work, to devise any scandalous Story, on purpose to vilify and blacken his Neighbour, and then bruits it abroad for certain Truth, though he knows it to be a base Brat of his own Invention.

And he is a *Slanderer* too, who, though not the Inventor of the Scandal, is yet a great

Encourager and Abettor of it, but listening SER. IV.

to such Stories, and affording them a favourable Hearing, and upon the slightest Rumour, and the slenderest Grounds, without the Trouble of a farther Examination: For according to *Solomon's Judgment* (*Prov. xvii. 4.*) *He is a wicked Doer that giveth heed to false Lips, and a Lyar that giveth Ear to a naughty Tongue.* That is, he in some Measure involves himself in the same Guilt, by shewing them so much undue Encouragement.

And whosoever would religiously avoid all Injustice in this Respect, must stop his Ears, as well as bridle his Tongue, and not willingly take up a Reproach against his Neighbour, even upon probable Testimony.

But when a Man who is too easy in believing any Evil of another, is as hasty in reporting it at all Adventures, before he knows whether it be true or false, and without any Care to inform himself; he entitles himself to the greater Share of the Guilt, and is in for it, almost as deep as the Inventor himself. For as one is the Author, so the other is the Publisher: And the Malice of the former would lose its Effect in great Part, were it not for

SER. IV. the Assistance and Confederacy of the latter; who is so industrious in vending and vouching his false Wares for him.

It is evident therefore, that both the malicious Inventor, and the credulous Entertainer, and the rash Relator, of any false and scandalous Report are all in their Degree guilty of *Slander*.

And the grossest and foulest Kind of *Slander* (under which all the rest are contained, as their principal) is that which is prohibited in the ninth Commandment, the *bearing false Witness against our Neighbour*; the most injurious and pernicious way of doing which, is by publickly accusing him in a Court of Justice, and binding the false Charge home upon him, by the wicked Solemnity of an Oath; and thereby exposing him to the Censure of the Law, and the Censure of the World.

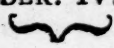
'Tis true, if the Perjury of the Accuser be once detected, the Brand of Infamy sticks upon his own execrable Name, and remains for ever indelible: But the most innocent Soul alive may be (and too often is) found unprepared to refute a false Testimony, that is cunningly laid together, and desperately
 2
 sworn

sworn to; and in that Case he can only comfort himself in his Innocence, but he must abide the Issue; there is no Help for it, he must submit to the Inconvenience. SER. IV.

But there is a sort of *Slander*, which, tho' it has not the Front to come into the open Courts, is nevertheless publick for all that. For it flies far and wide with incredible Swift-ness, every where proclaiming the pretended Crime of the Person aim'd at, and fixing it upon him with loud Asseverations, and perpetual Repetitions; 'till at length the confident Report is pretty generally believed; at least it gains Credit with those, who care not to reserve an Ear for the charitable Side, and spreads farther than any Vindication can well reach.

And 'tis very hard for the injured Person to do any Right to his own Reputation, and so much the harder, because when common Fame becomes the Accuser, it is not so soon traced to the first Head. And there can scarce be any confronting of the Evidence.

And the most pestilent way of spreading the Infection of this Kind of *Slander*, is by publishing and dispersing bitter *Invectives* and *Libels*, pointed with *satirical Wit*, or at

SER. IV.  least written with great Rudeness and Virulency of Language, and shameless Impudence: By means of all which, the Scandal scatters wider, and sinks deeper, and sticks longer, to the Diminution or Ruin of many a good Man's Reputation, and oftentimes such as are of eminent Character, whose Merits and Service might claim another Sort of Requital, than that of publick Defamation. And this Sort of *Slander*, whether from common Fame, or from the Press, is differently appointed, and appears in different Dresses, as may best hope to recommend itself, and do its Work the most effectually.

Sometimes it is aimed at particular Persons, and with particular Articles of Accusation, such as may sound most unpopularly, and beget a sudden and strong Prejudice in the Minds of those, who are to be persuaded to believe them; and for what is wanting in Proof, it shall be sure to be abundantly made up in positive Assertion.

Sometimes again it is levelled at whole Bodies of Men, and contained in general Charges, infamous Characters, odious Epithets, and arbitrary Nick-Names: Which make out nothing, though they seem to im-

ply a great deal that is very criminal, and SER. IV. which shall be thought so, by those that are apt to be imposed upon by insignificant, but ill-founding Words. And this Way of *calumniating* is the more useful to the Men of Design, and the more mischievous to the innocent, because 'tis easy to affix an ill Name, that will not soon be wiped off again, though it may be hard enough at the same Time to assign the ill Thing or Action that did deserve it; as Saint *Paul*, we know, was cry'd out upon for *a pestilent Fellow, and a Mover of Sedition* (Acts xxiv. 5.) Though they could not charge him with any seditious Act, nor any Doctrines (however he may have been since slanderously reported) that the least favoured it.

These *Slanders* are some of the most notorious Kinds of Calumny, and the openest Methods of attacking Men's Reputations. And though every one that delights to defame his Neighbour, designs for the most part to make his Infamy as publick as possible, yet there are some privater and closer Ways of conveying the Scandal, which work the Effect slyly, and yet fail not of a timely and sufficient Publication.

SER. IV. Such is the *Whisperer's* base Artifice, who, when he is resolved to load his Neighbour with Infamy to some Purpose, pretends to make a Secret of it, which he safely deposits, first with one good Friend, and then with another, who are commonly well disposed to believe so choice a Secret, and are loth to lose the Pleasure of telling it again in their Turns: And thus 'tis handed from one to another, 'till at last the Secret breaks out, and makes a Noise at the *Market* and at the *Exchange*. And thus a poor innocent Man, without smelling any thing of the Train, or knowing who it was that undermined him so in the Dark, finds himself blown up all at once, when 'tis too late to prevent it, and perhaps hardly possible to recover it.

Another cunning Piece of Address in propagating of *Scandal* is to do it, not by Way of direct and special Charge, but under fly Insinuations and Implications, with a seeming Reserve. As who should say, " Well! " I have heard such strange Things of a " certain Person you know in the World, " as would make you stand amazed; the " vilest Things! But upon my Word you " are not like to have them from me; I take

" no

“no Delight in such Stories.” And yet 'tis SER. IV. odds but he presently prevails upon himself to tell a great deal more, and worse than what he knows to be true. And then perhaps he breaks off again abruptly, and would leave you under the Apprehension, that he has not told you the one half of what he could. And by this artificial Management, the Person who is the Subject of this Discourse, and the Sufferer by it, stands charged with very heavy (though unknown) Crimes, which by the Manner of concealing them, it is designed you should believe, are much worse than the Sample given.

There are several other sly Ways of infusing an Evil Opinion into People's Minds, of Persons that never deserved it; by imputing their Actions to evil Principles, with which, as far as appears, they have no kind of Connexion, and taxing them with evil Consequences, to which they have no Tendency. By partial Representations of Things, or perverse Misconstructions; by magnifying small Blemishes, and detracting from great Virtues, by envious and insidious Praises, designed only to make Way for some ill-natured *But* or *Exception*, &c. and the like: In all which

SER. IV. Ways the Venom of a *slandrous Tongue* instills it self easily and insensibly, and infects our Communication much sooner, and worse too, than it could in a Method less disguised.

But of all other Methods of fastening Reproach upon the undeserving, there is one that I cannot well determine, whether it has more of Art, or of Impudence in it. And that is the strange Dexterity that some Men have to lay their own Faults at other Men's Doors; and then set the People to point at them. So usually (to borrow some of Dr. *Barrow's* express Words, Vol. 1. Sermon. 17. p. 247. Folio, to whom it is difficult not to be beholden upon this Subject) " The best
 " Friends of Mankind, those who most
 " heartily wish the Peace and Prosperity of
 " the World, and most earnestly to their
 " Power, desire to promote them, have all
 " the Disturbances and Disasters happening
 " charged on them, by those *fiery Vixens*,
 " who (in Pursuance of their base Designs,
 " or Gratifications of their wild Passions) do
 " themselves really embroil Things, and
 " raise miserable Combustions in the World.
 " So it is that they who have the Conscience
 " to do Mischief, will have the Confidence

" also

“ also to disavow the Blame, and the Iniqui-^{SER. IV.}
“ ty ; and have the Confidence to lay it up-
“ on those that are the most innocent.” Thus
all the publick Calamities and Confusions that
happened of old in the *Roman* Empire, were
imputed by the *Heathens* to the *Christians*,
and the very Profession of *Christianity*; when
their own enormous Sins were the real pro-
curing Cause of all those Judgments; and
particularly their Obstinacy in opposing the
blessed Gospel of Christ. And though such
gross Misimputations are quickly seen thro’,
by the more discerning; yet when they are
urged with undaunted Assurance, and incul-
cated in the People’s Ears with restless Cla-
mours; the Plea of injured Innocence is ea-
sily drowned in the midst of the common
Outcry; and those that are actually guilty
are very severe against their own Crimes,
when transferred to the Account of their
harmless Neighbours; and triumph over their
own Wickedness, in the feigned Persons of
their oppressed Adversaries. And let these Hints
 suffice, on a Subject so various and extensive,
concerning the Nature of *Slander*, its Kinds
and Degrees, and the usual Arts and Me-
thods of conveying it. Only let it be called
to

SER. IV. to Mind, before I proceed, that any false
 ~~~~~ Accusation, either in a Court of Justice, or  
 out of it, by a *Lye* of one's own inventing,  
 or taken up and reported at second hand,  
 whether openly or covertly, by direct Charge,  
 or oblique Reflection, by sly Address, or  
 downright Impudence; I say, any such Ac-  
 cusation, in what way soever it be laid, to rob  
 a Person of his good Name, makes the Accu-  
 ser guilty of the Sin of Slander.

*Secondly*, The Malignity of which Sin I  
 come now in the second Place to set before  
 you, that I may the more effectually dissuade  
 People from indulging so evil an Habit, so  
 deservedly odious, and so pernicious.

And without going further about, it will  
 appear to be a Sin of more than ordinary  
 Malignity, if it be considered in general, that  
 it is a shameful Abuse of the natural Talent  
 of Speech; and then more particularly, that  
 it is a grievous Violation of the Duty, which  
 is owing to our Neighbour in Point of Vera-  
 city, of Charity, and of Justice.

And it is doubtless, in the first Place, a  
 most shameful Abuse of the natural Talent  
 of Speech; for that excellent Faculty (next  
 after



after paying the just Tribute of our Creator's Praises) was given us to fit us for the main

SER. IV.

Ends, and mutual Offices of Society, and to render us helpful, and beneficial, and comfortable to one another, by rational Discourse, and friendly Advice, and agreeable Conversation; which is one great Privilege that Men enjoy above the Brutes. And consequently, nothing can be more preposterous or absurd, than to turn the Tongue, the Instrument of Speech, and thereby of all social Communication, into a *Maul* and a *Sword*, and a *sharp Arrow*. For so it is, when it uttereth *Slander*, it bruiseeth, it cutteth, and it pierceth, and leaves deep and unseemly Scars upon Men's Reputation; instead of any Comfort or Advantage, it brings fore Vexation, Damage, and Disgrace. In brief, it unnaturally defeats its own End and Use, and makes Mankind such disagreeable Companions to each other, that they are scarce worthy the Name of sociable Creatures.

But then the Heinousness of this Sin discovereth it self still more particularly, as it is a grievous Violation of the Duty we owe to our Neighbour in point of Veracity. For there is a strict Obligation lies upon us all, to  
put

SER. IV. *put away Lying, and speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour* (Ephes. iv. 25.) *as we are Members one of another; as we are Men, Citizens, and Christians.*

But this Obligation the *Slanderer* manifestly breaks through; both in respect of the Persons spoken of, and the Persons spoken to. As it regards the first; because he charges them wrongfully and maliciously, and then endeavours to make the false Story pass for current Truth. As it regards the latter, because he studies to impose upon their Credulity, and lead them into the groundless Prejudice, or rash Error, concerning the innocent. And to aggravate the Matter still more, *Slander* is as much an Offence against Charity, as it is a Deviation from Truth. For Charity, as she is disposed to all manner of Acts of Kindness, so she has a particular Tenderness for any Man's good Name, as knowing it to be altogether as precious, as 'tis brittle. And it is reckoned among other the excellent Properties ascribed to her by St. Paul, that *she beareth all Things, believeth all Things, and hopeth all Things* (1 Cor. xiii. 7.) *i. e.* She bears with People's real Failings and Infirmities, and is willing to throw a Mantle

over,

over, and hide them too, so far as may con-<sup>SER. IV:</sup>  
 sist with their Good, or conduce to their  
 Amendment. She judges always on the fa-  
 vourable Side, and believes the best, where  
 there is but the least Colour for it; and if  
 there be none, she would be glad to hope  
 the best still, even against Probability. But  
 how unlike, how opposite to all this, and  
 how devoid of all that Candour, which Cha-  
 rity always exercises, in thinking and speak-  
 ing, is the Spirit of *Slander*? *That* has a  
 fruitful Invention to make Faults where she  
 finds none, and has *false Glasses* always at  
 hand, to magnify and multiply them, where  
 she does find any. *That* is sure to wrest every  
 Word a Man drops to the very worst Sense of  
 which 'tis capable, and to represent every  
 Action in the most disadvantageous Light,  
 and the ugliest Colours imaginable. *That*  
 takes a great deal of Pains, and a particular  
 Pleasure too, to hand about any scandalous  
 Report, though she does not know it to be  
 true, nor has any probable Reason to think  
 it so; but is neither careful, nor willing to re-  
 tract or suppress it, even after she is convinced  
 that it is false; which is a Pitch of Unchari-  
 tableness, that I think cannot easily be ex-  
 ceeded.

But

SER. IV. But to make the Load of Guilt still the greater, the Sin of *Slander* is chargeable with flagrant Injustice. And for this we may appeal to the common Sentiments of Mankind, the *Slanderer* himself not excepted. For there is no Man, not even he that is addicted the most to asperse and vilify others; but when he is touched in Point of Reputation himself, finds it a very sensible Part, and is ready enough to make his Complaint. And as soon as he has uttered his Complaint, his next Appeal is to Conscience; you shall hear him pleading vehemently in his own Behalf; and he will be apt to join in the common Complaint, and say, " Well, 'tis happy for  
 " me, I know my own Innocence, but sure  
 " no innocent Man was ever so wronged  
 " and abused, they have laid to my Charge  
 " Things that I know no more of than the  
 " Child that is unborn; it is purely the de-  
 " vilish Invention of my Enemies."

This is what every Man sees clearly enough in his own Case; and yet the Case is the very same, whether he happen to be the Aggressor, or the Sufferer. Which is an undeniable Argument, that whosoever deals in *Scandal*, is guilty of very great Iniquity, because he

delights



delights to do that to others, which he would  
be very unwilling they should do unto him,  
even though it were in the Way of *Retalia-*  
*tion.* SER. IV.

Besides, the Greatness of the Injury done  
in these Cases is hardly to be estimated. For  
there is nothing again that the sober Part of  
Mankind are more generally agreed in, than  
in setting the highest Value upon their good  
Name and Reputation, which is looked upon  
as a *Jewel* more precious than all their other  
Possessions. And in its Effects and Conse-  
quences, it is really so: For a Man's chiefest  
Interest, his Successes in the World, his  
Capacity of doing Good, the very Safety,  
Comfort, and Conveniences of his Life, nay  
and sometimes Life itself do depend there-  
upon; so that when he is spoiled of his  
Reputation, he loses the Enjoyment of every  
thing besides, excepting a good Conscience:  
The Damage he sustains is only less than  
that of Murder. And there is this unhappy  
Circumstance in all Injuries of this Nature,  
that they are hardly capable of Reparation.  
Tis easy enough to make Restitution for  
Thefts or Extortions; but a good Name once  
taken away, who shall restore again? It is  
feldom

SER. IV. seldom indeed in the *Slanderer's* Will or Inclination to make such fair Amends. His Bent and Temper stands quite another Way: But it is much less in his Power (if he were willing) to repair the Wrong sufficiently. For the Scandal flies too swift for the most Part to be overtaken by a Vindication, and the first finds a welcome Reception many times, where the latter cannot be admitted; a Wound in the Reputation rakes so, that 'tis very hard to close it handsomely: There will remain a plain Seam, and the very Pain of it too will go near to be felt very sensibly ever after. So grievously, so irreparably injurious is the Sin of Slander.

And what need I lay on farther Aggravation, though there is Room enough for it, if I should trace it up to the Principles and Causes from whence it generally springs, or pursue it into the Consequences, to which it naturally tends; both of which are bad enough in all Conscience.

The Causes are such as these, rank Ill-Nature, that takes a Pleasure in doing Mischief. Revenge, that lays hold of every Weapon to execute its Malice. Self-Interest and Covetousness, that sticks at no Means

to compass its own Ends. Pining Envy, to <sup>SER. IV</sup> which all true Worth and Merit is a perpetual *Eye-Sore*. Restless Ambition, that employs all Engines to overturn those that stand in its Way, and raise itself upon their Ruin. Turbulent Faction or Schism, that cannot make or maintain their Party, or annoy their Opposites, without this Kind of Artillery. These, I say, are some of the ordinary and more immediate Causes, that are usually productive of *Slander*; an Effect altogether worthy of its Extraction and Alliances. And if I were to trace it any higher, I must carry it up to the Fountain of Mischief, *Satan*; that sworn *Accuser of the Brethren*; that *Father of Lies*; to whose Instigation it is originally owing; whose Resemblance it bears, whose Spirit it breathes, and whose wicked Work it is continually a doing.

Witness for that again, the many pernicious Consequences that issue from it, some of which are these: In its privater Walks it creates Misunderstandings in Families (and that for Trifles scarce worth the naming) and separates very Friends and Brethren (nay Wives and Husbands, where they are so foolish as to give Way to it) and sows Dissention among

SER. IV. Neighbours, and makes them worse than Strangers: In its more publick Sphere, it disturbs the Peace of Societies, it raises Jealousies, it widens Differences, it heightens Animosities, it enrages Discord and Diffention, and perpetuates Disorder and Confusion; especially when it flies at Persons of superior Eminence, Quality, and Worth, with a Design to render them odious and suspected, and to conjure up the Spirit of Sedition against those that are in Authority.

And to reckon up no more, when it intrudeth boldly into the Courts of Justice, to back and strengthen its false Accusations with deliberate Perjury, too well concerted to be discovered; then it worketh Ruin, irresistible Ruin to the unhappy Persons against whom 'tis levelled; robbing them even of their Innocence, at least in the Opinion of the World, and often not sparing their very Life. So perillous, so deadly an Instrument of Mischief is a *slandrous Tongue*.

And I hope I may have said enough in brief to discover the Turpitude and Malignity of this Sin, and how well it deserves its Portion in that *fiery Lake*, appointed for every one that



that loveth and maketh a Lye. And I might SER. IV.  
hope that I have said enough to dissuade all  
sober *Christians* from so detestable a Practice.

But yet alas! if one looks abroad into the  
World, the Humour seems to be too predo-  
minant, the Disease too obstinate, to yield to  
so mild a Remedy as that of a Dissuasive from  
the Pulpit; one would rather be tempted to  
think that a *Cloyster*, or a *Solitude* were the  
best Security against the raging Evil. A  
peaceable Man for his Quiet, an innocent  
Man for his Safety, a good Man to assuage  
his Grief, would be tempted to wish with  
the Prophet *Jeremy* (ix. 2, 3.) *Oh! that I*  
*had a Lodging-place in the Wilderneck of Way-*  
*faring Men, that I might leave my People,*  
*and go from them; for they are an Assembly of*  
*treacherous Men.* They are Brass and Iron,  
all Corruptness; they have bent their Tongue  
like their Bow for Lies; and they shoot out  
their Arrows, even bitter Words (Psal. lxiv.  
3.) and are armed at all Points to carry on  
this foul War against their honest, peaceable,  
and undesigning Neighbours. Too plain a  
Picture, it must be confessed, too ugly a  
Likeness this of ourselves: It is with Sorrow  
and Shame that I appeal to Fact and Expe-  
rience

SER. IV. rience for all this. But what is it, if we would confess the Truth, that is made the chief Diversion in those that are accounted the most innocent Meetings for Conversation? What is it but carping and censuring, traducing and back-biting one another? Is it not this that gives the high Relish to most of our Entertainments? And what again is the Subject Matter of all our Disputings and Wranglings, but vile Aspersions, invidious Insinuations, and arbitrary Names and Marks of Distinction, that are but empty Sounds, which have no other Signification, or Use, but to divide, distract, and confound us? And what else the Burden of our Discourse in all publick Places of Resort, but railing and reviling, not only particular Persons of the most distinguished and untainted Integrity, and shining Abilities, but great Numbers, and whole Bodies of Men; charging them with foul Crimes which perhaps never entered into their Thoughts, Crimes that they abhor as much as their Accusers possibly can do? And in the midst of all this Riot, Authority itself is affronted and despised, the *Executive* and *Legislative* both set at Defiance, and even the Sacredness of Majesty itself rudely violated.

*of a Slanderous Tongue.*

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For the *Slanderers* and *Libellers* are a desperate *Band of Men*, who have said, *with our Tongue we will prevail, our Lips are our own, who is the Lord over us?* (Psal. xii. 4.) And they seem to have hardened themselves into a confident Belief, that the poisoned Arrows with which they fight, are more than a Match for the *Rods* and *Axes* of publick Justice. But as this daring Species of *Slander* is not easily to be awed, much less is it to be persuaded or argued into Silence; it must be the coercive Force of severer Laws vigorously executed; it must be the *Iron Hands of Vengeance* that can bind this *Fury* of the *Tongue* and *Pen*, and that can tame this *Monster of Licentiousness*. SER. IV.

Let us therefore no longer take Delight to bite and tear one another's good Names to pieces, lest we in good earnest be consumed one of another, and save our Enemies the Labour. Let us no longer cast these Firebrands at one another in Sport: For the Sport is for the *Papist*, the *Libertine*, and *Atheist*, and *for all that bear Evil-Will to our Sion*; and 'tis to the great Dishonour of our most holy Religion, and the Grief of all good Men, as well as the imminent Hazard both

SER. IV. of our present Peace and Safety, and our  
 everlasting Salvation. Let us no longer then  
 break through all the Ties of natural Affinity,  
 civil Relation, and *Christian Fellowship*, in  
*speaking every Man Evil against his Brother,*  
*and slandering his own Mother's Son*; but let  
 us dwell together in Unity, as those that have  
 been bred up in the same Communion, that  
 kneel at the same Altar; as those who pray  
 for the Peace of *Jerusalem* with unfeigned  
 Lips, and promote it with their unwearied  
 Endeavours; and that have all the same com-  
 mon Interests, both temporal and eternal.  
 Finally, Brethren, to conclude with Saint  
*Peter's* excellent Directions (1 Pet. iii. 8, &c.)  
*Be ye all of one Mind, having Compassion one*  
*of another, love as Brethren, be pitiful, be*  
*courteous; not rendering Evil for Evil, or*  
*Railing for Railing; but contrarywise Blessing;*  
*knowing that ye are thereunto called. That*  
*ye should inherit a Blessing. For he that will*  
*love Life, and see good Days, let him refrain*  
*his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they*  
*speake no Guile. Let him eschew Evil, and do*  
*Good; let him seek Peace, and ensue it. For the*  
*Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and*  
*his Ears are open unto their Prayers: But*  
 the



*of a Slandrous Tongue.*

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*the Face of the Lord is against them that do* SER. IV.  
*Evil.* And from him all *Evil-Doers*, and  
*Evil-Speakers* too, will receive their certain  
Confusion, but the righteous and innocent  
Souls their Protection and Comfort. Now  
to God the Father, God the Son, and God  
the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, and One  
God, be ascribed, as is due, all Praise, Glory,  
Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, hence-  
forth, and for evermore. *Amen.*



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## S E R M O N V.

The Law and the Prophets fulfilled  
by Christ.



MATT. V. 17.

*Think not that I am come to destroy  
the Law or the Prophets: I am  
not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

**T**HE blessed Jesus, that perfect Law-SERM.V.  
giver, and practising Teacher of all  
Righteousness, having just given a  
Specimen of his heavenly Doctrine, and re-  
commended it to the Acceptance of his Hear-  
ers, by annexing to every Duty its proper  
Blessing, does, in these Words, seasonably  
prepare them to hearken to that further En-  
forcement

SERM.V. *forcement* that he was about to add to what  
 he had already said.

For being about to illustrate and apply  
*(vid. Chrysoft. in loc.)* what he had before  
 advanced in some remarkable Particulars that  
 seemed to thwart the Opinion and Practice of  
 their most admired Doctors, and to fortify  
 his Precepts moreover with Threats, as well  
 as Promises, he wisely foresaw, that he might  
 probably be suspected, or perhaps industriously  
 represented, as an Opposer or Perverter of the  
*Jewish Law, and the propheticall Writings.*

And therefore that they might be under  
 no Prejudice on this Account, he prevents  
 the very Objection, and professedly declares  
 the contrary in the Words of the Text  
*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law  
 or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but  
 to fulfil.*

And it was but necessary to obviate this  
 Misprision; for the Law being given by *Me-  
 ses*, and taught and expounded by the Pro-  
 phets; and both he and they being com-  
 missioned by God, as undeniably they were  
 the People might justly (nay it was their Du-  
 ty to) reject any Doctrine (how specious so-  
 ever in Appearance) that should be set up



in direct Opposition to God's own Appoint-  
ments. SERM.V.  
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Our Saviour therefore, wholly to remove this Suspicion, professes openly, that it was far from his Design to violate or annul the Law, or any *prophetical* Exposition or Application of it; so far from that, that he came on purpose to pursue the main Intendment of it, to restore it to its first Integrity, to assert its just Perfection, and to make way for its last and most exact Accomplishment.

And if upon a fair Examination it should appear, that the Law was in every Part and Point of it, so punctually and compleatly fulfilled, in and by the Lord Jesus, then that which might at first View look like Matter of Exception to the *Jews*, was indeed the best Proof to *them*; and is to us the greatest Confirmation of the Truth and Divinity of the *Christian Religion*; and that the Author of it is he, the very same of whom *Moses* in the Law and the *Prophets* did write (as *Deut.* xviii. 15.) *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet (out of the midst of thee) of thy Brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken* (and *Isaiab* lxi. 1.) *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath*

SERM.V. *bath anointed me to preach good Tidings unto the meek, &c.*

For the Honour therefore of Christ our Lawgiver, and in Vindication of our common Faith, I shall endeavour in the Sequel of this Discourse,

First, To shew, that pursuant to the End for which he here declares that he came into the World, the *Law* and the *Prophets* were (in fact) by him *fulfilled*. And then,

Secondly, Having established this necessary Point of Doctrine, I shall subjoin some useful Reflections, grounded thereupon.

First, I am to shew, that, pursuant to that End, for which Christ here declares, that he came into the World, the *Law* and the *Prophets* were (in fact) by him *fulfilled*.

I need not observe to you what has been already intimated, that by the *Law* and the *Prophets* we are to understand, that System or Institution, which was delivered to the *Jews*, by the Mediation of *Moses*, and was inculcated upon them, and farther cleared up in the Writings of the *Prophets*.

And

And the whole System is divided into these SERM. V.
three Branches, viz. the *Law moral*, the
Law ceremonial, and the *Law judicial*.

The *moral Law* is that which comprizes the whole Sum of their Duty towards God and Man, and gives Directions for the good Government of themselves, and the ordering their whole Conversation so as to discharge their respective Duty to both. And it consists of such Precepts as are agreeable to the natural Notions that Men have of Good and Evil, which being founded upon eternal Reason, are always and immutably the same: And consequently this Law must be allowed to be of perpetual Obligation.

The original Design of this Law, whilst it was only imprinted in Men's Hearts, and not yet written in Tables of Stone, was to preserve them, as they were made, in the Image and Likeness of God, and a State of perfect Innocence; that so they might be justified in his Sight, and entitled to the promised Reward.

But after Sin once entered into the World, and Mankind had apostatized from God, and their own Reason, lest the Notions of Virtue and Vice should be wholly obliterated,
the

SERM. V. the *written Law* was then added because of

Transgressions (as the Apostle says, *Gal. iii. 19.*) And, under this State it served partly to restrain them from Sin, by the Terror of its Threatnings, and partly to convince them of their Guilt, and make them sensible of the Curse to which they were subject, and of their own wretched Impotence, either to obey God's Will, or to avoid the Penalty of their Disobedience, by which means they were both driven and conducted to Christ, whose Gospel alone is the Power of God unto Salvation.

The *ceremonial Law* is that which contains the Rites and Rules of God's outward Worship, which were ordained, not for any intrinsic Value or Efficacy of their own, but for their Suitableness to the Genius of that Age and People for which they were calculated, and their symbolical or typical Signification. For the End and Use of all these Ceremonies was partly to discriminate the *Jews*, as God's Peculiar, and to keep them at a Distance from the Idolatries and Abominations of the *Gentiles*; and partly to put them in mind of that inward Purity and Perfection which was the Aim and Scope of the

fulfilled by Christ.

III

the Law; but principally to represent in SERM.V.
Types and Figures, and mystick Characters,
all Things appertaining to the Person and Of-
fice of the *Messiah*, by whom that Grace
was to be dispensed, which the Rigour of the
Law would not admit, and that *Truth to be*
brought to Light, which was couched under
these Shadows.

The *judicial Law* is that which relates to
their political Government, and is indeed a
Sanction and Guard to the whole, by keep-
ing up a due Order and just Discipline, not
only in Matters of common Intercourse, but
also in ritual and moral Duties.

And the Prescriptions of this Part of the
Law are such, as are either built upon Prin-
ciples of universal Justice, or else suited to
the peculiar Circumstance and Condition of
that People. And the End of it is in some
measure like to that of the ceremonial; that
is, to keep them separate from other Nations,
and to prefigure the *Kingdom* of the *Messiah*.

And having taken this brief Survey of the
Nature and Design of the *Law* of *Moses*, we
shall soon be satisfied upon Enquiry, that our
Lord Jesus Christ did eminently fulfil it, in
every Part and Branch of it. And

1st, For

SERM.V. 1st, For the moral Part of it (which we own to be *holy*, and *just*, and *good*, and of everlasting Obligation) it can hardly be disputed, it must not be denied, but that he fulfilled it in every the least *Punctilio*, and answered every Demand of it to a Tittle.

Did the Law require exact and universal Obedience? Behold, *This is he that did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.* (1 Pet. ii. 22.) Is it written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them?* (Gal. iii. 10, &c.) This is he that fulfilled the Law too even in this Respect, by submitting to the Penalty of it; and *redeemed us from the Curse of it, by being made a Curse for us.* (Ver. 13.)

And whereas the Letter of the Law was, by the learnedest Expositors, and (in Pretence) the strictest Observers of it, applied only to the outward Acts of Sin, and those of the grossest Kind too, such as Murders and Adulteries, he restored it to its genuine Meaning, and extended it to its just Latitude, forbidding (as he does in the Sequel of this Chapter) even those *Peccadillo's* which they made no Account of; nay, and every irregular Motion

tion or Passion, that has any Tendency to Evil. SER. V.

And (in the 15th of *St. Matthew*) we find that he zealously asserted the Commandments of God against those *false Zealots*, who had almost made it of no Effect by their own Traditions, and juttled out one of the most indispensable Duties in all Morality, *viz.* the Honour and Maintenance due to their aged Parents.

And to crown all the rest, whereas by the *Deeds of the Law* (even the *moral Law*) *no Flesh could be justified, the Righteousness of God is now manifested, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ: And being justified freely by his Grace*, (which mitigates the Rigour of the Law) we are not only commanded, but also encouraged and enabled to perform an acceptable Obedience, by the exceeding precious Reward, and the plentiful Measure and powerful Aid of the Holy Spirit that is afforded to us in his Gospel.

In the Upshot, therefore, he that acquitted himself with so much Integrity in the Discharge of the whole *moral Law* without any Omission or Deviation; he that, notwithstanding his own spotless Innocence, volun-

SER. V. *tarily* suffer'd the Penalty of the Law, and was punish'd for the Transgression of others: he that was a constant Assertor of the true Sense and just Authority of the Law, against all Innovators or Gainlayers: And lastly, he that to the Solemnity of his Precepts, for the Observance of the Law in its most extended and refined Sense, added the Encouragement of his Promises, and the Assistance of his Grace to facilitate the Performance: He, I say, so far as the moral Part goes, cannot with any Colour be said *to destroy the Law*, but must in all Justice be allow'd most punctually to have *fulfilled* it.

And in this Respect, likewise, the *Prophets* are exactly *fulfill'd*. For besides that they frequently lay the chief Stress upon moral Duties, as in that Passage of *Micah* vi. 8. *He hath shew'd thee, O Man, what is good: And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* I say besides this, we find the Description of the *Messiah*, and his personal Endowments, and the whole Tenor of his Actions, to be agreeable hereunto. For we read (*Isai.* liii. 12.) that *he did no Violence, neither was any Deceit in his Mouth,*

fulfilled by Christ.

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SER. V.

and yet that *he was bruised for our Iniquities, and bare the Sins of many, and made Intercession for the Transgressors.* And in the next Chapter it is foretold, that *his Church should be established in Righteousness, (Isai. liv. 14.) that they should all be taught of the Lord, (ver. 13.) and that not only their Reward, but their Obedience, should be owing to God's Grace and Favour, (ver. 17.) This is the Heritage of the Servants of the Lord: And their Righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.* But

2dly, As for the *ceremonial Part* of the Law, (tho' that was not instituted for its own Sake, or its intrinsick Goodness) yet he fulfilled that too with all possible Exactness.

He was *circumcised the eighth Day: And after the Days of his Mother's Purification were accomplished, he was brought to Jerusalem, and presented to the Lord, (Luke ii. 22.)* He sent the Leper, whom he had cleans'd, immediately to the Priest to make the customary Offering: He kept the Passover and other their solemn Feasts: In one Word, he was inaugurated to his Office by the Baptism of *John*; and the Reason that he assigned for it, when the *Baptist* scrupled

SER. V. to do it, is such as bespeaks him to be most religiously observant of any Rite or Ceremony, that was either necessary or requisite for him to use. *For so (says he) it becometh us to fulfill all Righteousness, (Mat. iii. 15.)*

And when the *Jews took Offence at him for healing on the Sabbath-day*, he did not think fit to vindicate himself otherwise, than by shewing that *Works of Mercy, and Necessity*, were no Profanation of the Day, for which he appeals to the *Law* it self, and their own receiv'd Opinion and Practice.

But yet it must be acknowledg'd, that the Obligation of the *ceremonial Law* did actually cease, after the Establishment of the *Christian Religion*; and that this was owing to the Nature and Design of that Religion. And how then can *Christ* be said to *fulfill that Law*, which in the Event he destroy'd?

To this it may be answer'd, that he did not by any Means destroy it, but that it had its Consummation in him, and so ceas'd of course; and even in ceasing was fulfill'd.

For if we look back to the first Institution of these Ceremonies, it is plain they were appointed in order to something else, and consequently were design'd to be only of a temporary

fulfilled by Christ.

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temporary Continuance, *i. e.* to continue no longer than till such Time as the main Ends and Reasons of their Institution were effectually answer'd. SER. V.

And they were instituted (as has been already observ'd) partly to keep the People of the *Jews* distinct from other Nations, that so they might not be infected with their Idolatries, and partly to convey into their Minds some Notion of that inward Purity, and those spiritual Duties, which were within the Intention of the Law, tho' not the express Letter; but chiefly to prefigure the Office and Times of the *Messiah*, and the State of Things under his Dispensation.

For Instance, Circumcision being a painful Operation in the Flesh, was a proper Symbol to put them in Mind of that Mortification and Excision of their fleshly Lusts, which even the Moral Law, as interpreted by *Christ*, did most certainly require.

And being withal a federal Rite, and the Memorial of a Covenant made between God and *Abraham*, and his Seed after him, of whom the *Messiah* was to come, it was a standing Sign of the Completion of that Promise, and being a Rite bloody in the Execution,

SER. V. ecution, it fore-signified his *precious Blood-shedding*.

Thus the legal Purifications and Abstinences did not improperly suggest that Men were oblig'd to serve God with a pure Heart, and to *keep themselves unspotted from the World*, (James i. 27.) and free from the Pollution of Sin; And withal, they fairly typified that Regeneration, Sanctification, and Redemption, which was to be wrought for us in *Christ Jesus*.

Once more: The Sacrifices were Rites of Supplication, and Remembrances of that Submission which they ow'd to God; and they were withal *Types* of that *perfect Oblation* that was to be offered upon the Cross, for the Sins of Mankind. And both *Moses* and the *Prophets* do sometimes speak of these ritual Observances, not in the proper, but in the spiritual and mystical Sense. Thus (in *Deut. x. 16.*) the People are exhorted to *circumcise the Foreskin of their Hearts*. And in the 73d *Psal. 13.* mention is made of *cleansing the Heart, and washing the Hands in Innocency*. And (in *Psal. li. 17.*) it is said, that *the Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit*. In Comparison of which, the legal Sacrifices are made,

made, as it were, of no Value in the Verse foregoing. And in the 53d of *Isaiab* we meet with several Expressions plainly alluding to Sacrifices; such as these, (ver. 4.) *Surely he hath born our Grievs, and carried our Sorrows; and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquities of us all. And thou shalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin, and he bare the Sins of many.* All which were anciently interpreted by the *Jews* themselves, of the Sacrifice of *Christ's* Death, in which alone they were compleatly verified.

And the Prophet *Jeremy*, even as *Maimonides* explains him, expressly declares, that the offering of Sacrifices was not the principal Thing that the Law aim'd at. (Ch. vii. 21, 22, 23.) *For thus saith the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel, I spake not unto the Fathers, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-Offerings or Sacrifices. But this Thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my Voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my People.*

And over and above all this, we have express Predictions concerning the Substitution of a new Law in the Place of the former, (as

SER. V. in *Jer.* xxxi. 32.) the Enlargement of the Church by calling the *Gentiles*, (as in *Micah* v. 8.) the Cessation of Sacrifices, and all other Rites that were confin'd to one Place, and the erecting a spiritual Worship, to be perform'd in every Place, (as in *Malachi* i. 11.) And lastly, the Destruction of the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and the Desolation and Diffipation of the People, which has now render'd all that ritual Service impracticable and impossible.

Upon the whole, therefore, since the *Middle Wall of Partition* is now *broken down*, and there is no need of Distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*: Since that Holiness of Life, and that Purity of Worship, is now directly enjoin'd, which was the primary Intention of the *Law*, and the *symbolical* Meaning even of those outward Ordinances: Since we now possess those good Things in Substance and Reality, which were once held forth as it were at a Distance in Figures and Shadows: Since Remission of Sins is the Purchase of *Christ's* Blood, and consequently there is no need of any Repetition of Sacrifices; and since the Providence of God has so order'd it, that there is no Possibility of offering

offering them at the Place and Times appointed; it is evident enough that the whole Bulk of the Ceremonial Law is in the Course of Things superseded and ceas'd, together with the Reason of the Institution. And yet notwithstanding he that taught us to expound the literal Meaning of this Law, by the spiritual: He that bore the plain *Impress* of all the *Types* therein contain'd; he that effected the great End and Design of it, may justly be said *not to destroy, but to fulfill it*: For in him it had its just Completion, and therefore in him also its final Period.

3dly, As for the *Judicial Law*, that was adapted in a great Measure to the peculiar Temper, Condition, and Situation, of the People to whom it was given; it cannot therefore be suppos'd that should be universally binding.

And besides, it was very anciently foretold (*Gen. xlix. 10.*) that *the Scepter should not depart from Judah, nor the Lawgiver from between his Feet, till the coming of Shiloh, to whom the gathering of the People was to be.* And accordingly, they all along kept up the Port of Government, or at least maintain'd their Right to it even in their lowest Ebb of Fortune,

SER. V. Fortune, and during the Space of their *Babylonish Captivity*. But when the Time for the Accomplishment of this Prophecy was once arriv'd, (and that was at the coming of *Christ*) then their Polity was to be quite dissolv'd: And since that Time, they have liv'd a vagrant sort of Life, without any certain Place of Abode, or settled Form of Government. And therefore the Force of this Part of their *Law* must also of Necessity have expir'd with the Dissolution of their Government.

However, our Lord *Jesus Christ* did likewise fulfil this part of the *Law*, by subjecting himself to it while he liv'd, by verifying whatever was *typical* in the Administration of it, and by transcribing all the Principles of common Right and Equity, that were contain'd in it, into the Body of his own Laws.

In fine, he *fulfill'd the whole Law*, and every Part of it, by pursuing the primary Intention, by asserting the genuine Sense, and answering all the great Ends and Reasons of it; and by ratifying and re-inforcing whatsoever was of perpetual Use or Obligation, and by giving his Disciples and Followers his Instructions and Injunctions, and
furnishing

furnishing them with sufficient Motives and Abilities, chearfully and acceptably to perform it. SER. V.

And he fulfill'd the *Prophets* too, both by vindicating their Expositions of the Law, against all the *false Glosses* and lewd Practices of other Pretenders, and by exhibiting in his own Person, and sustaining and executing all that the old *Types* had prefigured, or their Predictions forenoted concerning the Qualifications, the Office, the Actions, and Sufferings, and all the whole *Oeconomy of the Messiah*, from his first Conception to his Exaltation at God's Right Hand. And therefore 'tis frequent for the *Evangelists*, as Occasion was given, to say this or that, that *it might be fulfill'd which was spoken by the Prophets*. And 'tis particularly observable, that all those Passages which are personally applied to *Christ*, in the New Testament, were anciently understood of the *Messiah*, even by the *Jews* themselves, before Prejudice and Obstinacy had hood-wink'd their Judgment, and stiffen'd them in Error.

And I hope by this Time I have made it sufficiently clear, that the *Law and the Prophets* were in Fact fulfill'd by the Blessed *Jesus*,

SER. V. sus, and that he had both Truth and Reason
 to bear him out, when he said, *I came not to
 destroy, but to fulfill.*

And having thus establish'd the Doctrine
 of the Text, I shall now secondly, but briefly,
 2dly, Subjoin a few useful Reflections
 grounded thereupon, and so conclude. And

1st, From what has been said we may
 draw a very illustrious Testimony to the
 Truth of the *Christian Religion*, both against
Jews and Infidels.

Against the *Jews*, because all the dark
Types and Figures, and the remotest *Pro-
 phecies* which are recorded in their own Books,
 and all the Marks and Characters of the *true
 Messiah*, do eminently concur in our *Jesus*,
 and have their full Complement in him.
 And to convince them of this, we desire
 them to understand the several Passages re-
 lating hereunto, no otherwise than their An-
 cestors did of old; for then they must needs
 discern, that *This is he of whom Moses, and
 the Law, and the Prophets did write.*

Against the *Infidels*, because, tho' there
 can be no Suspicion of Conspiracy, yet they
 are very careful in keeping our Records for
 us; and upon the Comparison there appears

so exact a Harmony between the Old Testament and New Testament, that it must be granted either that Prophecies were remarkably fulfill'd, and astonishing Miracles were wrought to give Countenance and Credit to a Lie, or else that the Truth of *Christianity* is most undeniably attested.

2dly, From hence also we may learn what our *Christian Duty* is. For Christ *came not to destroy, but to fulfill*; and he thought it became him *to fulfill all Righteousness*, and to leave a perfect Example behind him; which it will become us also to imitate, to the utmost of our Power, especially since he has not only commanded, but invited us so to do, by the most prevailing Motives, and enabled us thereunto by his gracious Assistance.

And indeed it cannot be imagin'd that Christ should so punctually *fulfill the Law and the Prophets*, on purpose to purchase an Indulgence for Sinners to transgress them at their Pleasure.

No; we must still take the *Yoke and Burden upon us*, tho' he has made it light and easy to our Shoulders. And we must endeavour (after his Pattern, and with his Help) to perform an entire and sincere Obedience

SER. V. to God. And so shall we be made the Righteousness of God in him, and obtain Acceptance through his Merits and Mediation.

3dly, From hence also we may take our Measures of the Perfection of the Gospel-Institution, and the Extent of that Obligation that it lays upon us. For since *Christ* fulfill'd all *Righteousness* himself, it cannot be thought that he design'd to excuse us from any, that is within the Compass of those Abilities with which he hath supplied us. And 'tis a Derogation both to his Authority and his Righteousness, to conceive that after he had taken such Pains to establish and perfect the Law in those Instances in which it had been most perverted and abus'd, that he should propose his heavenly Doctrine, and the most refin'd part of it, in the Way of Counsel only, and not with the Force and Sanction of Precept. No, no; Let every *Christian* be persuaded that it is the Will of *Christ*, and his own indispensable Duty, to restrain all the irregular Motions of, as well as to abstain from the Violence of Murder, to guard against the *Adultery of the Eye*, as well as the grosser Act, and to bear Wrongs patiently, and forgive them freely, and to love and do

Good

Good to all. And that this is the only Way SERM. V.
to be perfect, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect, and so receive the Crown of our Obedience in everlasting Glory.

2dly, If our Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill all Righteousness, not to destroy, but to fulfill, of which we have this solemn Assurance (Ver. 18.) *Verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, 'till all be fulfilled.* I say, if Christ was so exceeding scrupulous of seeing the Law fulfilled to a Tittle, how careful, how fearful should Christians be of not destroying what he intended should be fulfilled, of not subverting what he hath actually established, either through an evil Heart of Unbelief, or the perverse Spirit of Contradiction?

And yet such a Spirit there is gone out among us, that presumes to sit in Judgment upon every thing that is called sacred, and to weigh every received Custom or Practice in the Church of God, and even the divine institutions themselves, not in the Balance of the Sanctuary, but in the uneven and unsteady Scale of their own weak and warp'd Reason.

The

SERM.V.

W and confounded the *Pharisees* upon a certain Occasion, said nevertheless to the Multitude and to his *Disciples* (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.) *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses Seat, therefore all whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.* And yet the refined *Christians* of this Age are afraid of allowing any Authority to the Governours of *Christ's Church*, because it must be lodged in the Hands of frail and fallible Men, who may possibly abuse it; although more at the worst they cannot abuse it than those to whom our Saviour in their Time directed so much Regard and Observance.

The blessed *Jesus* said to the Leper he had cleansed, *Go thy way, shew thy self to the Priest, and offer the Gift that Moses commanded for a Testimony unto them.* (Matt. viii. 4.) Notwithstanding he had been cured by Miracle (by one of the Miracles which it was foretold the *Messiah* was to work) he was nevertheless enjoined to pass through the appointed Forms, and to *shew himself to the Priest*. But these refined *Christians* think there is no Need of the Intervention of a *Priest*, in cleansing Men from their sinful Impurities.

And

And although God chose the Sons of Levi, under the Law, to bless the People in his Name forever: Yet with these good Men that forever is so entirely out-dated, that God hath chose none to bless in their Stead under the Gospel; but human Benedictions (though of Christian Priests, and in the Name of Christ their Lord) are meer vain Words, that profit nothing.

Again the blessed Jesus was pleased with much Solemnity to breathe on his Apostles, and say (*John* xx. 22, 23.) Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever Sins ye retain, they are retained. And he commissioned his Apostles to baptize all Nations, promising moreover, that he would be with them always to the End of the World; which must of Necessity imply the Continuance of his Presence with their Successors after them, as long as the World should last.

But these refined Christians have found out at last, that, solemn as these Words may sound, there's little or nothing in them, nothing however that can appertain to their Successors (if any such are to be allowed) they are very sure, that the Ministration of

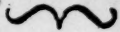
SER. IV. the *Christian Priest* is both useless and senseless as to the Forgiveness of Sins; because if the Person is penitent, he will be forgiven without it, if not, he shall be forgiven with it. Which by the Way is an Objection that lies full as strong against the Exercise of that Power of remitting and retaining, that was given to the *Apostles* themselves, as to any that is pretended to by our reformed Church. So that these good *Christians* must be left to dispute the Use and Expediency of this Power with Christ their King, their Lawgiver, and Judge, who was the Author of it.

Again, the blessed Jesus hath instituted the two Sacraments of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, as the Means and Pledges of his Grace; and he hath also commissioned his *Apostles*, and those who derive in Succession from them, to administer them in his Name to such as are fitly disposed. But these reformed *Christians*, if they don't wholly deny the internal Efficacy of these Sacraments, they do at least interpret them into a very jejune Meaning, and in a great Measure dispute away all the Reverence that is due unto them. And for the Administration, they can com-

fulfilled by Christ.

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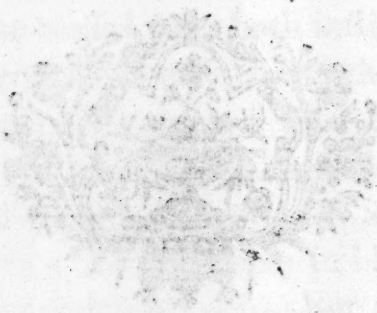
SERM.V.



ceive no need of a Commission from Christ. For Order sake 'tis fit they'll own, that some certain Persons should be set apart for this Purpose; but who, how, or by whom, with them is no great Matter. These and such like are the new-fangled Notions in Divinity, which in my small Judgment tend not to fulfill, but to *destroy*; not to edify, but to undermine, or overturn the Church of God. But, *Beloved, we have not so learned Christ.* Now to God the Father, &c.



the need of a Constitution from which
 Order else is the will of the people
 and the people should be the source of
 power; but who, how, or by what
 means is to give it? The answer is
 to be found in the Constitution itself.
 It is the only source of power
 and the only source of law.
 It is the only source of power
 and the only source of law.
 It is the only source of power
 and the only source of law.

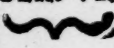


S E R M O N VI.

In what Respects the Righteousness
of the Scribes and Pharisees was
defective.

MATT. V. 20.

*For I say unto you, that except your
Righteousness shall exceed the Right-
eousness of the Scribes and Phari-
sees, ye shall in no Case enter into
the Kingdom of Heaven.*

OUR blessed Saviour, when first he SER. VI.
entered upon his *prophetical* Office, 
was aware of an unjust Suspicion
that might probably be suggested to the Pre-
judice

SER. VI. *judice of his just Authority and heavenly Doctrine; namely, that it was set up in direct Opposition to that of Moses and the Prophets that went before him.*

Foreseeing therefore that this would go near to be cast in his Teeth by the false Zealots whom he did indeed oppose, he takes away the very Handle of the Cavil, and puts himself of his own accord upon this Issue, declaring openly, *that he came not to destroy the Law, as it was truly expounded by the Prophets, but to fulfill it; i. e. (as I have largely shewn in a ^a Discourse upon that Argument) to assert the genuine Meaning and just Perfection of it, to pursue the main Intention, and answer all the great Ends and Reasons of it, and to bring it to its last and most exact Accomplishment in every Part and Point of it.*

And that he might not be thought to do this *gratis*, or only to rid his Hands of a Difficulty, that he could not fairly answer, he repeats it, and imprints it upon the Minds of his Hearers (Ver. 18.) in Words of great Weight and Solemnity: *For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot*

^a Sermon V.

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 135
one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, SER. VI
till all be fulfilled. (Ver. 18.)

And, to shew that he meant all this in the strictest Sense, without any thing of Exception or Reserve, he farther declares, that even the least Matters of Duty, those which the *Jewish Doctors* were too apt to overlook, as not being comprehended in the Law, or else to set light by, as having no legal Punishment annexed to them, that even these were of necessary and indispensable Obligation; and that the wilful Omission of them should be severely punished in the next World, and the religious Observation of them as amply rewarded. *Whosoever* (says he) *shall break one of these least Commandments, and teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* (Ver. 19.)

Our Saviour therefore, not content barely to remove a Suspicion that might seem to lie against him, takes upon himself (as he had Reason good) to be the Asserter and Restorer, as well as an Observer of the Law, and withal insinuates, that those among the *Jews*, who passed for the most zealous Defenders of it,

136 *In what Respects the Righteousness of*

SER. VI. were indeed the most shameful Prevaricators, and did either maliciously pervert and elude, or at best mistake it, and deviate from it in their Practice.

And from hence he takes Occasion in the Words of the Text, to set forth the Excellency of that Religion which he taught, and to require a more exact Compliance, and greater Degrees of Perfection, even from the meanest of his Followers, than these confident Boasters could justly pretend to, or really attain to.

For I say unto you, except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. In which Words, by *Righteousness* is meant the Obedience of a *Christian* in the Discharge of his whole Duty both towards God and Man: And by the *Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, is meant that legal Obedience, whether real or pretended, that they insisted upon, and trusted to: And the *Scribes and Pharisees* are singled out in particular, because they were the Men in chief Repute, both for their Skill in expounding, and their Niceness in observing the Law; nay, they were not only esteem'd

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 137

SER. VI.

as surpassing other common Men in Sanctity and Knowledge, but they were thought even to exceed the Bounds of meer Duty, and to merit and supererogate in the Observance of several *traditional Rites*, more than the Law any where enjoin'd; and yet, notwithstanding all their specious Shews, and high Pretensions, our Saviour expressly tells his Disciples, *that unless they should excel* even these extraordinary Men, so much admired by themselves and others, *they should in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, i. e. into that State of Glory which is to be the sincere *Christian's* Reward, alluding to that Threatening against those that were disobedient to the Law of *Moses*, that *they should not enter into the Land of Promise*.

In the Words thus understood, there are these two Things plainly implied;

First, That there was a great Defect in that *Righteousness* or Obedience which was taught and practised by the *straitest Sect* of the *Jewish Religion*, (as *St. Paul* calls that of the *Pharisees*, *Acts* xxvi. 5.) and was reckon'd to be according to the perfect Manner of the Law of their Fathers.

Secondly,

SER. VI. *Secondly, And that there is a direct Obligation upon Christians to be more strictly and sincerely, and universally righteous, than any of them could pretend to be, or really were. Both which I hope to make out to you in the Process. And*

First, I say there was a great and manifest Defect in that Righteousness or Obedience which was taught and practis'd even by the strictest Sect of the Jewish Religion, as the Pharisees were reputed, and was reckon'd also (as St. Paul, Acts xxii. 3.) to be according to the perfect Manner of the Law of their Fathers.

And for the Proof of this, I need not industriously lay open the Pride and Presumption, the Partiality and Hypocrisy, the Covetousness and Cruelty, and all that shameful Corruption and Degeneracy, of which our Saviour convicted the *Pharisees* of his Time. For without reciting the whole Catalogue of their Vices, and the many Aggravations with which they were attended, their Obedience will soon appear to be very defective, even with all the Grains of Allowance that can be made to them. For

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 139

1st, It is shrewdly to be suspected, that their SER. VI. shining Zeal, and all their goodly Pretences to extraordinary Sanctity, were founded upon a lame Principle, and proceeded not from the Love of God, a Sense of their Duty, and a Reverence to the Authority of his Law; but rather from Vain-glory, or Self-interest.

For he that *knew what was in Man*, informs us, *that they gave Alms, and stood praying in the Corners of the Streets, and disfigur'd their Faces when they fasted; and this on Purpose to be seen of Men, and to court their Admiration and Applause. For they receiv'd Honour one from another, and sought not for that Honour which cometh of God only,* (John v. 44.) Nay, we find that they put on the Garb and Guise of Religion, on Purpose to cover their Knavery and Extortion: *They devour'd Widows Houses, and for a Pretence made long Prayers,* (Mat. xxiii. 14. Mark ii. 40. Luke xx. 47.) which was a double Cheat, first deluding their Admirers into an Opinion of their singular Piety, and then by a sanctified Piece of Villainy defrauding them of their Substance. And if we consider how often they are branded with the odious Name of *Hypocrites*, even by him that had the greatest

SER. VI.  greatest Tenderness for the Infirmities of Mankind, where there was any Room for Compassion, we may well conclude, that they justly deserved it of him; that their Religion was all outside; and that they were in Effect no better than Prophaners of the Law, when, for mean and mercenary Ends, they made a Shew of observing it with more Exactness than their Neighbours. But

2dly, It is farther observable, that their strict and scrupulous Adherence to their own Traditions, and Superadditions to the Law was indeed a notorious Deviation from it, and inconsistent with that Perfection of Holiness which they laid claim to. For some of these Traditions were such, as did plainly evacuate the Force of the Law itself, and interfere with known Duties; such Duties as Nature and Reason do make to be unalterable and indispensable. This is what our Saviour charges home upon them (*Matth. xv. 3, &c.*) where, when they according to their usual Manner, had superciliously demanded of him, (Ver. 2.) *Why do thy Disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders?* 3. *For they wash not their Hands when they eat Bread,* He answer'd them with just Indignation.

Why

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 141

Why do ye also transgress the Commandment SER. VI.
of God by your Tradition? 4. For God com-

manded saying, Honour thy Father and thy Mother. And he that curseth Father or Mother, let him dye the Death. 5. But ye say, *whosoever shall say to his Father or Mother, it is a Gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;* 6. *and honour not his Father or Mother, he shall be free.* Thus have ye made the Commandment of God of none Effect by your Tradition. As if it were possible that an irreligious and unnatural Vow should absolve them of their natural Duty to their Parents, and all the Obligations of Humanity, Gratitude, and Love.

And yet, this is the Rule that these nice *Casuits* went by; nay, they placed the meritorious Pitch of all religious Perfection in such Observances, which of what Account they were in God's Sight, one of the Prophets, nay, even their own Reason might have taught them. For *Isaiah* says (xxix. 13. according to the *Septuagint*) *In vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.* In vain, indeed! For that Religion is founded in Contradiction, and that pretended Obedience is no better
than

SER. VI. than Rebellion, that prescribes Laws to itself, and sets up the Will of Man against the Authority of God.

3dly, But thirdly, even in those Cases where there was no direct Contrariety between the Law of these human Traditions, they did nevertheless derogate extremely from it, by setting so high a Value, and laying so great a Stress upon the Shell and the Letter, the meer outward Ordinance and little Circumstances and Punctilio's, to the manifest Neglect of more essential and substantial Duties, which were almost jostled out of Doors by vain Conceits, by Niceties and Distinctions, and needless Scrupulosities about Matters of little or no Moment.

For instance, that very Custom of *washing their Hands before eating* was held so sacred, tho' grounded only upon Tradition, that one of their *Rabbi's*, having Water given him in Prison both to wash and to drink, and having unfortunately spilt the one half, he chose rather to wash with the other, though ready to perish for Thirst, than to violate so ancient and venerable a Tradition. And it is a Maxim with another of them, that to eat with unwashed Hands is as great a Crime as that of Whoredom,

Nay,

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 143

Nay, it appears from the Reprehensions SER. VI. that our Lord is frequently giving them, that they were so strangely conceited of the Virtue of their customary Purifications, whether legal or traditional, that they thought (were these but duly performed) that they were perfectly free from all manner of Defilement; little considering, that whilst they were so over-curious in washing themselves, and the outside of the Vessels which they used, that they neglected to cleanse the *Inside* of the Man, *that was full of Ravening and Wickedness*: little considering, *that from within, out of the Heart of Man, proceed evil Thoughts, Adulteries, Fornications, Murders, Thefts, Covetousness, Wickedness, Deceit, Lasciviousness, an evil Eye, Blasphemies, Pride, Foolishness*; *that all these evil Things come from within and defile the Man, (Mat. xv. 19.)* not with any legal Impurity, but with a foul Stain of Guilt, that all the Water in ten thousand Rivers can never purify.

And such another vain Imagination was that of theirs which made them so very careful and exact in tything even to the least *Shred of an Herb*, without either Care or Conscience about the *weightier Matters of the*

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SER. VI. *the Law, Judgment, and the Love of God;*

whereas, if they had understood the Nature of their Duty, or in Reality designed to perform it, *these they ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.* They ought to have done both, and given the Preference to the more important Duties of Piety and Justice, and not spent their whole Stock of Zeal upon the smallest *Punctilio's*. And therefore with all their scrupulous Exactness about *Mint, Annise and Cummin*, they still bear the Character of *Hypocrites* we find, and a *Woe* is their only Recompence.

4^{thly}, Had they been more impartial than they were in obeying the chief Heads of the Law, yet their Obedience was by no means answerable to their Obligation taken in its full Force and Extent. For they vainly thought that the Law was entirely satisfied, and that they were innocent and blameless in all Things thereunto pertaining, if they did but take Care to avoid those Transgressions, that fell under the Cognizance of the Judges, and had some legal Penalty allotted to them. And therefore they made but very slender Account, if any at all, of those evil Thoughts and Desires, which, tho' conceived in the Heart

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 145

SER. VI.

Heart and cherished there, do not break forth into Act, and consequently cannot come under the Notice and Censure of the Law. And this fond Persuasion obtained so much among them, that it gave Occasion to *David Kimchi* one of the learnedest among the *Jews* (vid. *Grot.* in Loc.) to put a forc'd and false Construction upon those Words of the *Psalmist*, (lxvi. 18.) *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not bear me.* That is, says he, although I should conceive a wicked Thought in my Heart, and were even ready to put it in Practice, however, this may be before God just as if I had utter'd it with my Lips, yet the Lord will not hearken to it, *i. e.* not so as to impute it to me for Sin.

A Gloss, as *Grotius* observes, quite contrary to the plain Meaning of the Text. But so they were persuaded, and they squared their Actions accordingly. And though Concupiscence or Lust was expressly forbidden in the Law, yet they looked upon it as Matter of Counsel rather than Precept, as finding no immediate Punishment that it was threatened with. At most, they thought the Transgressions of this Kind so very inconsiderable,

L

that,

SER. VI. that, if they did stand in Need of any Attonement, yet the daily Victims and annual Expiations might abundantly suffice for that Purpose without any further Trouble.

And of this or the like Nature, as it appears to me, are those which our Saviour calls the *least of his Commandments*, meaning that they passed for such in common Estimation, altho' in his Judgment they were far otherwise. For in the Sequel he condemns all rash and contumelious Anger, tho' not proceeding to any farther Degree of Violence or Murder; he condemns all wanton Glances and lewd Inclinations, though not gratified by actual Uncleanneſs: he condemns all vain and idle Oaths, tho' not accompanied with Perjury, or the direct Profanation of God's own Name: And in all these and several other Instances, he lays great Weight upon such Matters, as had been deemed of small Consideration, and insists upon such Elevations of Piety, Innocence, and Perfection, as the profoundest Doctors, and strictest Professors were utter Strangers to in *Theory* and *Practice*. And yet since it is the Consent of the Will that makes Wickedneſs what it is, even before it is produced into

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 147 .

Act, and since the Law was given by the ^{SER. VI.} *omniscient Searcher of Hearts*, it was but reasonable to believe, that it was the Design of so perfect a *Lawgiver* to lay a Restraint upon such Thoughts and Desires, as even whilst yet unaccomplished, have all the Malignity of Sin in them, and a perpetual Tendency to promote and propagate it. And that the Tenour of the Law was really such is demonstrable from that Explication and Vindication of it that we find in this Chapter.

And therefore they were notoriously defective in their Obedience, who contenting themselves with meaner Attainments in Virtue, or rather with a meer Shadow of it, took Pains to cramp the Sense of the Law, to distinguish away the plainest Duties.

And now to collect what has been said into one Sum, if all the specious Appearance of Zeal and Sanctity, for which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were so famous in their Time, be not unjustly suspected of Vanity and Interest, and consequently their Religion was little else but Hypocrisy: if the most meritorious of their Services, which in their own Account was the keeping so religiously to their ancient Traditions, was in some Cases

SER. VI. irreconcilable with the Law it self, and destructive of all good Morality: if their Fondness for ritual Observances and circumstantial Matters was unreasonably great, and their Concern about weightier Things as scandalously little; and lastly, if they measured their Duty by outward Compliances, and trusted in that as being Righteousness, that would justify them before God, without Respect had to the Integrity of the Heart: I say, if they are truly chargeable with all these Mistakes and Miscarriages, then it is not to be denied that that Righteousness or Obedience which was taught and practised by the strictest Sect of the *Jewish Religion*, and reckoned to be according to the *perfect Manner of the Law of their Fathers*, was very defective and imperfect. This was the first Thing that I proposed to make out to you, and this being now dispatched, I believe the second will not be much disputed, viz.

2dly, That there is a direct Obligation upon us *Christians*, to be more strictly, and sincerely, and universally righteous than any of them either really were, or could pretend to be. *For I say unto you* (says he, *that taught as one having Authority*) except
your

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 149

your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of SER. VI.
the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case
enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And the Condition, as I take it, may be resolved into this very evident Reason, to wit, that where greater Advantages, and larger Privileges, and indeed all possible Encouragements are freely granted, there a suitable Return of ingenuous Duty is justly to be expected. And the Gospel Dispensation having so much the Pre-eminence above the Law in these several Respects, the Obligation of a *Christian* must be supposed to rise so much the higher, and tie him up so much the stricter, in Proportion to the Greatness of the Benefits he is made Partaker of. And the Benefits that do thus enhance our Obligation are chiefly those that follow.

First, The clearer Information that the *Christian Religion* affords us. *Secondly*, The gracious Conditions that it offers. *Thirdly*, The mighty Assistance that it lends us, And *Fourthly*, The glorious Reward that it promises.

First, The clearer Information that *Christianity* affords us. For we are now no longer amused with *dark Types* and *Figures*, but the

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SER. VI. *Veil is done away in Christ, and the Object of our Faith and Worship is nakedly exhibited to us. And (as St. John speaks, 1 Ep. v. 20.) We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an Understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal Life.*

We are now no longer taught in *mystical Language* of Signs and Symbols; but the Intent of the Law is fully explained, and that inward Purity and spiritual Perfection expressly enjoined, which was formerly shadowed forth in those sensible Representations. And the two main Branches of our whole Duty towards God and Man, are summ'd up in this easy *Compendium*.—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. (Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40.)*

Since therefore we have received such bright Illuminations and plain Instructions
both

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 151

both in Matters of Faith and Practice, we SER. VI. are most undoubtedly so much the more obliged to shew forth the Praises of him, and our Gratitude to him *that has called us out of Darknes into this marvellous Light, by walking worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called,* and answerably to that Measure of Knowledge that has been imparted to us.

Secondly, The Graciousness of the Conditions offered to us in the Gospel is another Advantage that lays an additional Obligation upon us. The Rigour of the Law was extremely great, and punished all the presumptuous Transgressors of it, with utter Excision, without any Abatements of Mercy according to the Apostle's Description of the *Righteousness which is in the Law*, or the Justification to be obtained by it. *The Man which doth those Things* (and he only) *shall live by them.* (Rom. x. 5, &c.) *But the Righteousness which is of Faith,* (proceeds he) *speaketh on this wise. Say not in thine Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven, i. e. to bring Christ down from above? Or, Who shall descend into the Deep? (that is to bring Christ again from the Dead) But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that is, the Word*

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SER. VI. *of Faith which we preach*: Which implies that the Justification of a *Christian* is procured for him, and freely conferred upon him by the Death and Resurrection of the Son of God, and that it depends not upon any difficult Performance of his own, that all that is required of him in Order to it is suited to his Capacity, and every Way reasonable and equitable. For he is discharged of the burthen some Part of the Law, the Rites and Ceremonies, and in lieu thereof, is obliged only to Faith in Christ his Saviour, and a new and filial Obedience. And to give him Heart and Courage chearfully to set about it, he has the comfortable Assurance both of Pardon for the Time past, and the Acceptance of his Repentance for the Time to come. For (as the Apostle speaks *Rom. iii. 24.*) *We are justified freely by his Grace thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, thro' Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, through the Forbearance of God. To declare his Righteousness, that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

And

the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 153

And since we are admitted to the Cove-^{SER. VI.}
nant of Grace upon Terms so very easy and
gracious, since nothing farther is required of
us in Order to our compleat Justification,
than to believe and to repent; this ought
in all Reason and Gratitude to engage us
diligently to fulfil the Condition. And we
ought to give the more earnest Heed to this
very Thing, because (as says the Author to
the Hebrews ii. 2.) *If the Word spoken by An-
gels was stedfast, and every Transgression re-
ceived a just Recompence of Reward; How
shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salva-
tion?* Which is, as it were, the last Experi-
ment of the Divine Goodness, and the only
Provision for our Safety and Happiness.

Thirdly, The mighty Assistance that the Gos-
pel promises, is another invaluable Privilege,
that still increases our Obligation. It was in-
deed impossible that *the Law should make the
Comers thereunto perfect*, partly through the
Unfitness of those Sacrifices to take away the
Guilt of Sin, and purge the Conscience; and
partly through the natural Inability of the
Sinner, and the want of a sufficient Supply
of spiritual Strength to perform any accept-
able Obedience. And had we been still left

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SER. VI. in this State of Impotence, we might well
 ~~~~~ have sat down in utter Despair of ever at-  
 taining to that impracticable Height of Per-  
 fection that *Christianity* requires.

But blessed be God since the *Word* was  
*made Flesh, and vouchsafed to dwell with us*  
*full of Grace and Truth*, both mitigating the  
 Rigors of the Law, and really exhibiting  
 those good Things of which the Law was  
 only a *Shadow of his Fulness* we have all re-  
 ceiv'd, and Grace for Grace, that is a Suffi-  
 ciency of spiritual Aid and Might, according  
 to the Riches of his Bounty.

And now, having such a plentiful Measure  
 of the Spirit, and *beholding* all with open  
 Face as in a *Glass*, the *Glory of the Lord*,  
*are changed into the same Image, from Glory*  
*to Glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord*: And  
 since the Power of the Gospel is able to work  
 so wonderful a Change in our Hearts, since  
 God has furnish'd us with these Abilities for  
 our own Improvement, and unspeakable Ad-  
 vantage, since he has promised a farther In-  
 crease of Grace upon a due Use of what he  
 has already given us; this must needs be a  
 fresh Obligation upon all *Christians* to use and  
 employ what they have, to the Praise of his

Glory



of the Scribes and Pharisees was defective. 155

Glory that gave it, and bring forth Fruits SER. VI.  
unto Holiness proportionably to the Husbandry that God has bestow'd upon them.

Fourthly, The glorious Reward that is propos'd to us in the Gospel, is that which crowns all, and is a mighty Enhancement to our Obligation: For the Recompence that is set before us is not Length of Days, but Eternity of Existence. It is not temporal Prosperity, but an *Inheritance immortal, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us*: It is not an *earthly Canaan, flowing with Milk and Honey*, Enjoyments that pall and perish in the very using; but it is an *immareffible Crown of Glory, a heavenly Kingdom made inconceivably delightful, as well as glorious, by the beatifick Presence of God, and the sweet Society of an innumerable Company of Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect.*

Since therefore we have these Promises (dearly beloved) better and clearer than the Jews had of old, or at least were able to discern, it is so much the more incumbent upon us, *to cleanse* our selves from all Filthiness of *Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*: Since we have so lively a Hope  
esta-

SER. VI. establish'd upon these Promises, we are most  
indispensibly oblig'd to *purify our selves, as he is pure*, and to copy after the Pattern of all Perfection, which is propos'd to us, both in the Precepts and Example of *Christ*; that so being cloath'd with habitual Holiness, and *striving to go on more to Perfection*, we may be in some good Measure prepar'd to enter upon, and bear a Part in that pure and blissful State, and to become at once perfectly holy, and perfectly happy in the Vision and Fruition of God for ever.



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 S E R M O N VII.  
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Our Saviour's Addition to the Sixth  
 Commandment.

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MATT. V. 21, 22.

*Ye have heard, that it was said by  
 [or to] them of old Time, Thou  
 shalt not kill: And whosoever shall  
 kill, shall be in Danger of the  
 Judgment.*

*But I say unto you, that whosoever  
 is angry with his Brother without  
 a Cause, shall be in Danger of the  
 Judgment; and whosoever shall  
 say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in  
 Danger*

*Danger of the Council: But whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in Danger of Hell-fire.*

SER. VII.

OUR Blessed Lord, upon the first publishing of his Holy Gospel, took care (as I have already noted to you) to prevent all Occasion of Suspicion or Cavil, by professing himself to be as he really was, not an Opposer, but the most religious Observer, the most faithful Expounder, and in all Respects the great Asserter and Establisher of the *Law of Moses*.

This is what he positively avers in the 17th, 18th and 19th Verses. And to shew that he was prepared to stand by what he had said, he does in the next Verse expressly require a more perfect Obedience to the Law, than the Men in Vogue for the ablest Doctors, and the greatest Saints among the Jews could pretend to. *Except your Righteousness*, says he, *shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: plainly intimating, notwithstanding the vast Reputation they had, that they were wretchedly defective, both in their



their pretended Skill in expounding, and SER. VII.  
their Strictness in observing every Point and  
Tittle of the Law.

And this Charge he makes good against  
them in the Sequel of this Chapter by parti-  
cular Instances ; the first of which we meet  
with in the Words of my Text. *Ye have*  
*beard, &c.*

And that we may be able to understand  
the true Force and full Import of these  
Words, I shall make it my present Busi-  
ness,

*First*, To explain the general Meaning of  
them.

*Secondly*, To state the particular Doctrine  
therein contained.

*Thirdly*, To shew wherein the Doctrine  
(so stated) contributes to the fulfilling or  
perfecting of the Law, or to the Proof of  
our Saviour's Assertion, both concerning him-  
self, and the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* his chief  
Adversaries. And then

*Fourthly*, I shall conclude with some sui-  
table Reflections upon the whole.

*First*, I begin with the first, viz. *To explain*  
*the*

**SER. VII.** *the general Meaning of the Words*, which are, or at least are made something intricate, partly by the Variety of Interpretations that are put upon them, and partly by the different Views that Men might have in fixing them to a particular Sense of their own, and partly perhaps for want of sufficient Light into the proper Use of some of the Expressions themselves; or the Customs therein alluded to.

However it be, there is scarce a Word among them all, that has passed without Examination. But it shall suffice me, if I can so far serve myself of the Critic's Help, as to pitch upon such a pertinent Signification of the Words, as shall render the general Meaning of them when put together, perspicuous and easy, and agreeable to the Scope and Intention of the Speaker. To proceed therefore gradually; enquire we first, what the Sense of the first Words is, that meet us in the very Introduction, *Ye have heard*. Upon which Dr. *Hammond* (Vid. not.) and others observe, that there were anciently three different Methods of interpreting Scripture among the *Jews*, the *literal*, the *mystical*, and the *parabolical*; the first of which was termed

termed *bearing*, as being a simple Recital SER. VII.  
of naked Matter of Fact, or the Letter of  
the Law to their Hearers. And in this  
Sence it is probable enough our Saviour  
might say, *Ye have heard*; or else, as *hear-*  
*ing* is put for Tradition, and that frequently  
by *Maimonides* a very learned Jew, or per-  
haps in a Sence arising out of both these  
Significations, as if he should have said, *This*  
*is the literal and traditionary Exposition,*  
*that you are made acquainted with,* and this  
is what the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* deliver for  
authentic, as being handed down from their  
*Ancestors*. For it follows,

2dly, *Ye have heard, that it was said by*  
*them of old Time*. And here a double Doubt  
is started, first whether it should be translated  
*by them*, or as it varied in the Margin *to*  
*them*, 2dly, who are the *οἱ ἀρχαῖοι*, these An-  
tients upon whom the Tradition is father'd.

As for the first, I find it is most generally  
agreed among the Learned, that there is  
more Propriety in translating it *to them*, than  
*by them*. And to this Opinion I incline,  
both because this Construction is more usual  
in Grammar, as well as the Writings of the  
New Testament, and because the Opposition

SER. VII. will be so much the more direct and evident.

*Ye have heard, that it was said to them of old—But I say unto you—*

As to the other Doubt, who these *Antients* should be, upon whom the Tradition is fathered, I think there is no great Question but it is to be understood of the Ancestors of the *Jews* at large, without assigning any certain Period of Time. *Grotius* indeed proposes it as a Thing probable, that many of that People had so gross a Sence of Things even in *Moses's* Time, that they had little or no Insight into the spiritual Meaning of the Law, and as little Regard to such Precepts of it, as wanted the Enforcement of a temporal Penalty. But whether that were so or no, this is certain, that their Posterity had a Sort of blind Veneration for the Authority of their Fathers; and this Principle the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* took care to rivet well into their Minds, that, under this Colour, they might impose their own Glosses and Corruptions upon them, as so many sacred and undoubted Traditions.

3dly, The next Enquiry will be, what it is to be in *Danger of the Judgment*. *Ye have heard, it was said to them of old Time,*

*Thou*



*Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in Danger of the Judgment.* Which rendering falls far short of the Force and Significancy of the original Word *ἐνοχος*, which according to the best *Grammarians*, signifies to be liable or obnoxious not to legal Process or Trial, but to Punishment, which implies the Guilt to be already proved, and consequently the Person to be obliged upon that Proof to submit to such Punishment as the Law directs, and for the Execution of which the Sentence of the Court only is supposed to be wanting. And thus, in the case before us, when it is said, *whosoever shall kill, shall be in Danger of the Judgment*; it is meant, that the Murderer (so convict) shall be liable to be condemned and punished by the Court appointed to judge such Criminals. And what that Court was, we shall see presently. For,

4thly, the Word *Judgment*, which is here put for that Court of Judicature that was to pass Sentence upon Murderers, is repeated again in the latter Part of my Text. *But I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in Danger of the Judgment; and whosoever shall say to his*  
M 2 *Brother,*

SER. VII. *Brother, Raca, shall be in Danger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, thou Fool, shall be in Danger of Hell-fire.*

In which Words there is a remarkable Gradation of three several Crimes, and as many Degrees of Punishment allotted to them, in Proportion, each of which will deserve our particular Attention.

The first Crime here condemned by our Blessed Lord, is causeless Anger, of which, whosoever is found guilty, is by this righteous Sentence adjudged to the Punishment allotted in the Law to the Murderer. *He shall be in Danger of the Judgment.*

For the better understanding of which we must have recourse to an Observation, that I think most Authors concur in, viz. that the Courts of Judicature among the Jews were of three Sorts. The inferior Court of all consisted of a *Triumvirate* or three Persons only, and their Power was as small as the Number of the Assessors, being confined only to Matters of common Right and Trespas, and all such kind of petty Controversies. The middlemost Court (which consisted of twenty three) had a larger Jurisdiction, and took Cognizance of capital Crimes,

Crimes, and past Sentence upon them within SER. VII.  
 some certain limited Rules. The highest  
 Court of all consisted of seventy, had an  
 Authority paramount to receive Appeals from  
 the other two, and the sovereign Power of  
 Life and Death, in all Causes, and over all  
 Persons without Restriction. Other Diffe-  
 rences there were between these several Courts,  
 which, because not material to our present  
 Purpose, I need not mention.

But 'tis plain, that it is the middlemost of  
 the three, which is here referred to and is  
 called the *Judgment*. For the *Triumvirate*  
 (as is before noted) had no Cognizance of  
 capital Causes, whereas Murder was made  
 capital by express Law. For we read *Numb.*  
*xxxv. 30, that Whoso killeth any Person, the*  
*Murderer shall be put to Death.*

And 'tis as plain, tho' the angry Man, i. e.  
 he that is apt to be so without Cause, is here  
 pronounced to be in *Danger of the Judgment*,  
 yet that he is not liable to the very same le-  
 gal Punishment with the Murderer, i. e.  
 temporal Death; because Anger, whilst con-  
 fined within the Breast, and not betraying  
 it self in Baseness or Bitterness of Words  
 (which is the Anger first pointed at) can-

SER. VII. not fall under the Notice of any human Judge, and therefore not under the Punishment by the Law appointed.

It remains therefore, that when it is said *Whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in Danger of the Judgment*, it must be meant by Way of Allusion, that such a one is as liable in God's righteous Judgment to eternal Damnation, as the Murderer by Law is to temporal Excision.

The second Crime here instanced in, is saying to a Man's Brother, *Raca*; which some will have to be an Interjection of Speech, signifying much Scorn and Indignation; others (and I think the most) will have it to stand for a *brainless, empty Fellow*; but all are agreed in the main, that it is an Expression betokening no small Contempt; and as such (as Doctor *Lightfoot* informs us) it was in very familiar Use among the *Jewish* Writers, which may be supposed to be the Reason that our Saviour chose to make it one of his Instances on this Occasion. And this contemptuous Anger, whoever is guilty of it, shall be liable to the Council, says he, that is to the Censure and Punishment of that grand *Sanhedrim* consisting of seventy,



or thereabouts, which by way of Eminence SER. VII. and Distinction was usually so called.

But here again, it cannot be imagined that the Person so offending should become literally obnoxious to some more grievous legal Punishment to be inflicted on him by the Decree of the great Council: for tho' Contempt added to Anger, of it self before unreasonable, be indeed an Aggravation, yet it is not such as the Law annexes any special Penalty to, unless when levelled against their Governors or their Parents, as *Grotius* well observes. All therefore that can be intended is this, that as the most heinous Offences were always punished by the *Sanhedrim*, and that with greater Severity, in the manner of Execution at least; so this, being a greater Fault than simple Anger, should by God's just Vengeance be more terribly punished in the World to come.

The third Offence here censured by our Blessed Lord is the angry Reproach of *Thou Fool*. In which perhaps it may admit of Question, what there is, that is either more provoking, or more injurious than that of *Raca*. But this is easily accounted for: for as Sin is doubtless the most egregious sort of

SER. VII. Folly, so the Sinner in Scripture frequently bears the Character of the *Fool*, and is marked out for such, particularly in *Psalms* xiv. i. x. 4. liii. 1. &c.

*Raca* therefore is the less reproachful of the two; for that points only at a natural Defect, this at gross Immorality: That upbraids a Man only with Levity and want of Wit, this with want of Honesty and good Conscience, and fixes a kind of Mark of Reprobation upon him, like to that *dogmatical* Censure of the *Pharisees*, *John* vii. 49. (which perhaps our Saviour might also aim at.) *This People who knoweth not the Law are cursed.*

This therefore being apparently the most heinous Offence, is deservedly condemned to the severest Punishment. It shall be liable, (says the most impartial Judge) εἰς τὴν γέενναν τῆς πυρός, even to the *Gehenna of Fire* or the *fiery Gehenna*, meaning the Place called *Tophet* in the Valley of *Hinnom*, where the idolatrous *Jews* made their Children to pass thro' the Fire to *Molech*, and which *Josiah* (as we read 2 *Kings* xxiii. 10.) caused to be defiled by the burning of dead Carcasses. But neither is this literally to be understood; for the Law had appointed no such Punishment,

nor had Custom introduced it: But our Sa-SER. VII.  
viour to strike the greater Terror upon them, ~~~~~  
alludes to this abominable Place, because the  
unheard of Cruelties there practised, and the  
perpetual Fires there burning, were the fittest  
*Emblem* to represent the unspeakable Horror  
and infinite Duration of *Hell-Torments*: In  
which it is plainly intimated, that the Con-  
tumely of *Thou Fool* should have the deep-  
est Share, as proceeding from the greatest  
Degree of Bitterness and Uncharitableness.  
And let so much suffice for the Explication  
of the Words, the general Meaning of which  
may easily be gathered out of the Premises  
and couch'd in short Paraphrase. *Ye have*  
*heard that it was said by those of old Time,*  
*&c. viz.* This is the Law and the ultimate  
Intention of the Law, as (your *Doctors* would  
persuade you) it has been understood in all  
Antiquity, and confirmed by uninterrupted  
*Tradition*, that actual Murder is a capital  
Crime. But I say unto you, with greater  
Authority and more Exactness, that even  
according to this Law, causeless Anger is a  
damnable Sin, in God's Judgment tho' not  
in Man's: and that it shall receive the greater  
Condemnation, according as it is more and  
more

SER. VII. more aggravated, either with scornful and contemptuous, or bitter and opprobrious Language. *Whosoever shall say unto his Brother, Raca, shall be in Danger of the Council, &c.*

Secondly, Having thus explained the Words, I proceed now to state the Doctrine therein contained: And the Doctrine is briefly this, that causeless Anger, especially when accompanied with Contempt and Contumely, is justly liable to Condemnation. How justly we shall see under the next Head of Discourse, where it shall be shewn, how this righteous Sentence of the Blessed Jesus does contribute to the fulfilling and perfecting of the Law. In the mean time it may be proper to inform our selves a little more particularly, wherein the Formality of the Sin consists, that stands here condemned.

For, when we are restrained, (as here we are) from *being angry without a Cause*, it is sufficiently implied, that, in its proper Circumstances, there may be a just Cause for it. And our Saviour's own Practice will warrant this Comment for good. For he has left us a remarkable Instance of his pious Indignation,



Indignation, in driving the Money-Changers SER. VII.  
out of the Temple; and we find (*Mark* iii. 5.)

that his very Compassion was mixed with Anger, so extremely provoking is Obstinacy and Perverseness even to him that was all Love and Charity. And no Doubt, in the Cause of God and Religion, in the removing of public Scandals, and the Defence of Virtue and Innocence, we also are obliged to be zealously affected after our Lord's own Example. And such a Proportion of Anger as is fit to be the Ingredient of Godly Zeal, is not only just but necessary: nay 'tis a Fault to be indifferent or remiss, in a Cause wherein the Honour of God, or the Good of Mankind is in any wise concerned, as we may learn from the Case of *Eli* and his Sons. [*1 Sam.* i, ii, &c.]

Nor is it to be imagined that the bare Use of the Word *Raca*, or *Thou Fool*, or others of the like Importance, is of it self enough to make a Man pass for a Scornor, or Reviler. For our Lord calls his own Disciples *Fools*, [*Luke* xxiv. 25.] and so does St. *Paul* the *Galatians* (iii. 1.) And St. *James* uses the very Expression that answers to *Raca*, in the Text, *O vain Man* (ii. 20.) Nay the

Scribes

SER. VII. *Scribes and Pharisees* are notoriously branded with the Name of *Fools*, and *Blind Hypocrites*, and *Vipers*, to all which they were very justly entitled, on the Account both of their perverse and ignorant Pride, and their subtle Diffimulation. And there is so much of the same *leaven* still in human Nature, that I think we need not stick to say, that there are some *Follies* and *Vices* that do really deserve to be exposed with Contempt, and publickly stigmatized.

For instance, there is a set of Men in the World, that delight to trifle in Things serious and sacred, that think it an Exercise of Wit, to burlesque the Holy Scriptures, and shew their Talent at reasoning by cavilling at its Authority, happy for ever in their Jest, and mighty secure, (I warrant you) in their *Infidelity*. And what is the proper Title of these Men? must they be *dubbed* for *Wits* with all this Levity, and Vanity, and bold Impiety? No. They are *incorrigible Fools*, *empty*, *thoughtless*, *desperate Wretches*, who, without once weighing the Evidence and Moment of Things, are resolved to run the Risque of Damnation, out of a Humour, and, if there should be a Hell at last, to se-

cure the hottest Place in it for themselves, SER. VII.  
 which is certainly such an extravagant Piece  
 of Folly and Madnes, that a wise and good  
 Man, even whilst he pities it, cannot but  
 scorn and despise it.

Another Instance of this Kind is the *Sanctified Hypocrite*, that copies close after the *Pharisees* in our Saviour's Time, and makes the Pretence of Religion a Cover for his Villany. Now I say, such a Man as this, when once his vile Arts are detected, ought to be marked with a Brand of Infamy, and to be called by the plain Name of *profane Mifcreant* and *Atheist*: For so in Truth he is; and so it is fit he should be distinguished, lest his scandalous Practices should redound to the Dishonour of that Religion, that he wears only for a Disguise, and professes for his Interest.

By what I have said upon this Article, I designed only to shew, that there may be a justifiable Cause of Anger, and in some Cases a sufficient Provocation even for Contempt and Reproach; and consequently that it is causeless Anger only, that is here condemned, together with such Contempt or Reproach, as usually bears it Company, and is for the  
 most

SER. VII. most part every whit as groundless. Now

Anger may be truly said to be causeless, 1<sup>st</sup>, with Respect to the Ground or Occasion. 2<sup>dly</sup>, To the Measure, 3<sup>dly</sup>, to the Manner.

1<sup>st</sup>, With Respect to the Ground or Occasion of it, Anger is then causeless, when Men will be *testy* and *quarrelsome*, when there is no Offence given, none, I mean, that could justly be so taken. For some such unhappy Tempers there are, that can strike the Sparks of Contention out of any Thing, and blow themselves up into Passion upon any the least Occasion. An innocent Jest, or a friendly Argument, common Discourse, or meer Table Talk, or any the most indifferent Matter that is, serves for Fuel to a Spirit that is so soon set on Fire. Nay, they can be angry with a Man even for doing a kind Office, or discharging his own Duty.

Give me leave to take an Example from our own Function. The Minister of God is doubtless obliged, if he has any Zeal for God's Honour, or any Love to Men's Souls, to reprove Vice both privately and publicly. Yet let him use his best Discretion to do both, or either in the most inoffensive Manner that he can, he shall hardly avoid giving Offence.



Offence. For whilst Men consult only their SER. VII. Self-love, Pride and Passion, they will be too apt to be angry, especially if they are guilty. But wherever Anger is conceived upon no Grounds at all, or such Grounds as these are, it is equally causeless and unjust; and offers manifest Wrong both to the Innocence of those who meant no manner of Harm, and to the Charity of those who intended a Kindness, if it might have been accepted.

2dly, Anger is also said to be causeless with Respect to the Measure. For even though there be a Cause for it, it ought still to be proportioned to the Merit of the Cause; and it is always to be esteemed without a Cause, so far as it exceeds the due Proportion. For there can be no Reason why a Man should be exceedingly incensed upon every frivolous Occasion, or why he should bestow the same Resentment upon a Trifle, that he does upon Matters of the greatest Moment. For Example, if any one (as too many are) be apt highly to resent the least disrespectful Word, or sly Reflection that passes in Conversation, when it bears upon himself, and yet can sit with abundance of Patience, and hear a great deal of lewd and profane Talk,

SER.VII. Talk, and whole Volleys of Oaths and Curfes,

 I say, that Man is as unreasonably angry in the first Case, as he is stupidly indifferent in the latter. For his Anger is apparently grounded upon the Value that he puts upon himself; and if this should be found to be extravagant, that must be allowed to be immoderate. And how much he over-rates his own Worth, is plain, from his sacrilegiously preferring his own Reputation, and the Respect he thinks he has a Right to, to the Honour of God, and the Reverence due to his most Holy Name.

And in what Case soever our Anger is thus disproportionate even to the just Cause of it, it is so far *causeless* and unreasonable. But moreover, our Anger must be bounded in its Duration, as well as Degree. Otherwise, tho' it commenced upon very good Reason, yet it may continue longer than in Justice and Reason it should; and then it is evidently as much without a Cause, as if it had been so from the Beginning. For instance, a Father may lawfully be angry with his Son, for being disorderly or ungovernable. But then this is supposed to be an affectionate Sort of Anger, that aims at his Amendment. And

if the Son out of a Sense of his Duty, or SER. VII. the Dread of a Parent's Displeasure, should actually amend, the Occasion of the Anger would then cease of Course, and so should the Anger too. And if it continues any longer, it is plainly out of all Order, and destitute of Reason; nay, it is indeed both cruel and unnatural.

I must add farther, that let the Cause be never so allowable and just, Anger is a Passion that must be called in only upon Occasion, and not suffered to take up its Dwelling with us. For it is so apt, where it finds Harbour, to degenerate into Hatred, and to instigate to Revenge, that it can upon no Terms deserve so much Indulgence. And therefore it is St. Paul's Admonition, *Let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath. Neither give Place to the Devil.* (Ephes. iv. 26.) Intimating that the longer we entertain it, the more Advantage Satan has to tempt us to Malice and Mischief. And tho' all Anger is not without a Cause, yet sure enough, that which is malicious and revengeful, is always so.

3dly, Anger may be said also to be causeless, with Respect to the Manner i. e. of expressing, and executing it, which ought never to

**SER. VII.** be with *Clamour*, and *Evil speaking*, *Scurrility*, and *Venom*. For these are no Ornaments, nor can they consist with the Meekness of a *Christian*, even when he is engaged in the best of Causes. I am sure Truth and Innocence stand in no Need of such *Abettors*. It is true, (as I have already noted) when Sinners are so far from concealing their Shame, that they grow impudent, and pride themselves in their Folly, a good Man may be allowed, nay, it is his Duty, to express his zealous Indignation in such Manner, as may be most proper to make them sensible of the Contempt and Infamy that they deserve. But this is only in such notorious Cases. In other Cases, a nice Regard must be had to Decency and Civility; and even Zeal it self must not be suffered to jostle out Charity. For when Anger exceeds the Bounds of Modesty and Charity, it is in that Respect, tho' there were nothing else to be objected, beside Rule, and beyond Reason. But when he that is angry with his Brother without a Cause, proceeds to point at him with a *Raca*, or *Thou Fool*, i. e. when he summons up all his Scorn and Insolence to aid an impotent Passion, and arms it with railing



railing and reviling to make it keener. When SER. VII. he that is angry without a Cause, is by that Anger prompted to be disdainful without a Cause, and foul mouth'd without a Cause: when instead of preferring another in Honour to himself, he treats a better Man, and a wiser than he is, with the utmost Contempt, and loads him with all kind of Reproaches, and perhaps damns him to the Pit of Hell, upon some Trifle that is not worth contending for, or meerly because he differs from him in some disputable Point, or cannot submit to the small smattering in Knowledge that he calls Demonstration: I say, when Anger that is of itself causeless and groundless, is moreover attended with these unreasonable Aggravations, it is then left without Colour or Excuse, and justly liable to Condemnation.

And this I take to be the true State of the Doctrine contained in these Words, *But I say unto you, Whosoever, &c.*

*Thirdly*, And now *thirdly* I shall briefly shew wherein the Doctrine of the Text (so stated) does contribute to the fulfilling and perfecting of the Law, and consequently

SER. VII. makes good our Saviour's Assertion of himself against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, his chief Adversaries.

And that it does in these two Respects, 1<sup>st</sup>, because it maintains the Obligation of the Law in its full Force and just Latitude. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Because it best answers the Scope and Intention, and the Holiness and Perfection of the Lawgiver.

1<sup>st</sup>, Because it maintains the Obligation of the Law in its full Force and just Latitude. The Letter of the Law says, *Thou shalt not kill*, i. e. according to the narrow Interpretation of the *Jewish Doctors*, with thy own Hand, or in thy proper Person. For it was for such Murder only (as Dr. *Lightfoot* informs us out of their own Writers) that a Man was liable to the great Council. So that in their Account even actual Murder was capable of Abatement and Extenuation. But Christ is so far from making any such Allowances, that he subjects even causeless Anger, and Contempt and Contumely, its ordinary Attendants, to severer Penalties than any human Power can inflict.

And with very good Reason, for irregular Anger causelessly taken up and carried on with

*to the Sixth Commandment.*

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with so much Baseness and Bitterness, does <sup>SER. VII.</sup> naturally beget Hatred. And this is expressly forbidden in the Law, (*Levit. xix. 17.*) *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine Heart.* And why? but because *whoſo hateth his Brother*, (as *St. John* ſays) *is a Murderer*, (*1 John iii. 15.*) i. e. he has all the wicked Will, and revengeful Intention of a Murderer, altho' he does not actually embrue his Hands in Blood. But he is nevertheless a Transgressor of the Law against Murder, both in the Reason of the Thing, and the Judgment of God, because he can find in his Heart to hate his Brother, notwithstanding the Prohibition of the Law. And could he do it with the same Impunity, he would certainly kill him to. Our Saviour therefore by condemning such causeless and malicious Anger, as has all the Malignity and Wickedness of Murder, excepting the last fatal Stroke, did manifestly contribute to the fulfilling and perfecting of the Law; by setting it free from that defective Sense that confined it only to the outward Act, and making the Obligation as extensive as the Reason it is grounded upon. Which will also further appear,

SER. VII. *2dly*, Because the Interpretation he has put upon it, best answers the Scope and Intention, as well as the Holiness and Perfection of the Law-giver.

Now the Scope and Intention of the Law-giver in enacting a Law against Murder, was most unquestionably to prevent Murder; which yet would have been but a slender Provision against it, if nothing else had been forbidden, but barely that Act of Violence that takes away a Man's Life. For Anger once indulged, soon gathers Rancour, and Malice once ingendered is perpetually labouring with Mischief; and bitter Words interchangeably given and taken, do always heighten the Provocation, and that Rage of a Man thus provoked is fierce and cruel, and not easily satisfied, without Blood. And had Men been thus far left at Liberty, Murder would have made sad Havock in the World, since we find it too often ensues from the Causes aforementioned, notwithstanding the Prohibition and Punishment, with which they are threatened. However, it is certain that Doctrine is most agreeable to the Intention of the Law against Murder, that lays a Restraint upon all inordinate Passion, and every



every evil Disposition, that has any Tendency SER. VII. thereunto.

And it well became him that said, *Thou shalt not kill*, to say also, *Thou shalt not without a Cause be angry with thy Brother*, nor despise, nor revile him, because the Permission of such Irregularities would interfere [not only] with the Design of the main Law it self, but also reflect upon the Holiness and Perfection of the Lawgiver. For he being the great *Searcher of Hearts*, should be supposed to have Respect in the first Place, (as most certainly he had) to the Integrity of the Heart. And therefore the *Pharisees* both dishonoured God, and made void his Law, by insisting only upon an outward Compliance with the Letter; whereas our Saviour did Honour and Justice to both, by strictly requiring the Obedience of the Mind and Affections.

*Fourthly*, And lastly, I should now conclude with some suitable Reflections upon the whole, but very briefly, because I would not be over-tedious. And

1<sup>st</sup>, It is observable in this first Instance that our Saviour has made no Addition to

**SER. VII.** the Law (as some will contend) either by Way of Precept or Counsel. For this Prohibition against causeless Anger, and its insolent Companions, is contained within the Reason of the Law, tho' not the Letter, and therefore it is no additional Precept. And as it is thus virtually comprehended in the Law, so it is enforced by Penalties more terrible than any temporal Death, even the Wrath of *that God*, that is a *consuming Fire*: and therefore it cannot pass for any more than an additional Counsel.

2dly, We may learn from a right Understanding of this Text, how ill grounded that Distinction is, of Sins *venial*, and Sins *mortal*, which yet *Bellarmino*, the great Champion of the Cause, will needs squeeze out of these Words. For, says he, here are three several Sorts or Degrees of Sins, the last of which only is adjudged to Hell-fire, and therefore, the other two are not liable to Damnation, but only to a temporary Punishment, which is what they mean by *venial*. To which it is obvious to answer, that there are three several Degrees of Punishment here allotted, to as many Degrees of the same Sin, viz. causeless Anger,

But

But nothing of all this is literally to be <sup>SER. VII.</sup> understood: for neither simple Anger, nor that which is abusive and contumelious, was really punishable either by the Judgment or the Council, or in the *Valley of Hinnom*. All that is meant therefore is only by Way of Allusion, that these three Degrees of Sin, are in God's fearful Judgment liable to proportionable Degrees of Punishment, the greatest of which is represented by the Horrors of that hateful Place: but the very least stands charged with the Guilt of Murder, and Murder (we know) by the Law was capital, and so consequently is Anger capital in the World to come, and therefore not venial, but damnable.

3dly, Tho' a fruitful Invention I find makes a fruitful Text, yet we may safely conclude against the same Author, that there is nothing to be gained towards *Purgatory* from hence. It is true indeed, here is express mention made of the Judgment, the Council, and of Hell-fire. But will it follow that God must needs erect so many several Tribunals in the other World, and appoint so many distinct Sorts of Punishment, and Places of Execution? At that rate they might prove

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prove two *Purgatories*, if they were not merciful, as well as one. For the *Council* is mentioned as well as the *Judgment*: and both, according to *their Supposition*, denote but some temporary kind of Punishment. But it is plain that all this is to be understood allusively; and that the Inequality consists not in the Kind, but the Degree of Punishment. And the lowest Degree here alluded to being temporal Excision, or natural Death, that which answers to it in God's Judgment must be eternal Damnation, which (in the *Revelations* ii. 11.) is called the 2d Death. And yet there will be Room for encreasing the Punishment in Proportion to the Sin: for tho' all the Torments of Hell be equal in Duration, yet in Intensity of Degree they are not. And that is all that is aimed at in this *Gradation*, the *Judgment*, the *Council* and *Hell-fire*.

4. But 4thly, The Reflections I have hitherto made, have been opposed to the false Inferences of others, I shall make but one more, and that touching our own wicked Practice in a Point most directly contrary to our Blessed Saviour's Injunction and Intention in this Place. For no Doubt his Intention

was



was by explaining this Precept in this extended Sense, as much as possible, to prevent Quarrels and Murders, by curbing that hasty Passion, and suppressing those provoking Words and Actions, that are most apt to transport Men to Violence. And yet (to our eternal Scandal be it spoken) Murders and Duels are as frequent among us, as if Jesus Christ had in so many Words repealed this whole Law, and given us the blessed Privilege to kill (I might add) and damn one another at once; or at least, as if, by forbidding causeless Anger and Contempt and Contumely, he had made every Man his own Judge and Avenger when once he imagines himself to be affronted or injured. For so it is, the least Slight or Disrespect, the least Slip of a Word, or Omission of Ceremony, or even the Suspicion of an Affront can hardly happen, but immediately a Challenge ensues, and out the Champions go to fight a Prize for Damnation. And, if a Man has the good Fortune to kill his Adversary fairly, (as the Phrase of the World is) it passes for a *gallant Action*, and the Blood-guiltiness stands for nothing. But what shall we say to these Men, that are so jealous of their own Honour, and yet so

SER. VII. so disregardful of God's Authority? Will they not at last be found to fight against God? <sup>a</sup> I have once before upon Occasion expostulated this Matter largely. I shall only leave this Consideration with them at present. If there be any Truth in this Text, if any Weight in our Saviour's Words, and causeless Anger be, as he has said, liable to God's everlasting Judgment, and Contempt and evil Speaking subject still to greater Degrees of Punishment in Hell, sure the Fire will be made seven times hotter for willful Murder, and God's fiercest Vengeance will be its Portion for ever.

Now to God the Father, &c.

<sup>a</sup> Sixth Vol. Sermon. 15.



S E R M O N VIII.

The true Method of making  
Satisfaction.

MATT. V. 23, 24, 25, 26.

*Therefore, if thou bring thy Gift to  
the Altar, and there remembrest  
that thy Brother hath ought against  
thee;*

*Leave there thy Gift before the Altar,  
and go thy Way, first be reconciled  
to thy Brother, and then come and  
offer thy Gift.*

*Agree with thine Adversary quickly,  
whiles thou art in the Way with  
him :*

*him: lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou pay the uttermost Farthing.*

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OUR Blessed Lord being engaged in an excellent Design of vindicating the Moral Law from the perverse strait-lac'd Interpretations, and gross Corruptions of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, makes the Law against Murder his first Instance, and shews (ver. 21, 22.) that the Intention of that particular Law was not only to restrain actual Violence and the Effusion of Blood, but also to suppress all inordinate Motions of Anger, and such provoking Expressions of Contempt and Contumely, which do often end in deliberate and cruel Revenge, or at least always bespeak the Man's Heart to be full of that Rancour, which would certainly prompt him to lift up his Hand against



*of making Satisfaction.*

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gainst his Brother, if he might do it with SERM.  
Impunity. VIII.

All such Disorders as these therefore, which are apt to have such mischievous Effects, our Saviour, with good Reason, comprehends under that general Prohibition, *Thou shalt not kill.* Nay, he extends the Obligation of the Law yet farther, and infers from hence a Necessity of voluntary Submission and Satisfaction, or whatever is proper to be done, in order to a mutual Reconciliation, where Offence has been given. *Therefore* (says he) *if thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* i. e. Since it is within the Intention of the Law against Murder to forbid causeless Anger, and all manner of contemptuous Usage, or reproachful Language, or whatsoever is most likely to be necessary to Murder; *Therefore* it is also necessary, according to the Tenour of the same Law, when a Man has injured or offended his Brother in any Kind, to endeavour a Reconciliation as soon as possible; there being no effectual Prevention of Mischief,

**SER. VII.** chief, no secure Protection for Men's Lives, but their mutual Love and good Will. And so much Stress is laid upon this, so indispensably are Men obliged to it, that no Sacrifice, it seems, will atone, no Gift will be accepted at God's Hand, without it. No! The Gift must be *left*, even after it is brought *before the Altar*; and the Reconciliation is first to be made; and afterward the Oblation.

In which there is very probably an Allusion and Reference to a fond Presumption among the *Pharisees*, viz. That their daily Sacrifices, and especially their free-will Offerings, were sufficient to expiate such Crimes as were not punishable by the Judges, (such as were rash Anger, Contempt and Contumely) even without any inward Change of the Mind or real Amendment. But this Mistake our Lord takes care to correct, and informs them, that God's outward Worship, though instituted by himself is of no Avail without Charity. And tho' they made but little Account of the Crimes, but now mentioned, as not being liable to any legal Penalty, he assures them, that even these or any other of the like Nature should be punished

nished with God's eternal Judgment if not prevented by a timely Repentance; the Reality of which is to be approved by a hearty Desire of Reconciliation, and all reasonable Overtures towards it. For this I take to be the true Import of those Words. *Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilest thou art in the Way with him, lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no Means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.* i. e. (without being over-nice in applying every Particular) as it happens in Matters of Debt or Trespafs, between Man and Man, if a Man will not come to any reasonable Agreement with another that has a just Demand upon him, but will suffer Things to run to Extremity, and force his Adversary to right himself by Law; the Law must, and will take its Course against him, tho' it be to his Ruin. So likewise at God's just Tribunal, if Men will not be persuaded to make up their Differences in time, and lay aside all Variance, and Wrath, and Hatred, the dreadful Sentence must inevitably proceed against them;

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VIII. and *They shall have Judgment without Mercy,*  
to all Eternity.

And having premised thus much concerning the Meaning and Connection of the Words, I shall in the farther Prosecution of them attempt to shew more particularly,

*First*, That mutual Charity and Forgiveness, is a Duty of strict Obligation.

*Secondly*, That *Christians* are more peculiarly under this Obligation. As it is a necessary Qualification in Order to the receiving the Lord's Supper.

*Thirdly*, That the Omission of so necessary and so principal a Point of our *Christian* Duty is utterly inexcusable before God.

*First*, And first I am to shew that mutual Charity and Forgiveness is a Duty of strict Obligation. I say mutual Charity and Forgiveness, for tho' it is the Offender only, in the Text, that is directed to make his Application without Delay, and sue for Reconciliation, yet no Doubt the Obligation is reciprocal, and the Party offended is no less engaged in Meekness to forgive upon the Penitent's Entreaty, than he is to shew the

Truth



Truth of his Repentance, by first laying aside his Enmity, and supplicating for Forgiveness. This is evident beyond Contradiction from the 6th of *St. Matt.* ver. 14, 15. *Mark* ii. 25. *Luke* vi. 37. xvii. 3, and all those several Places, where mention is made of this Matter.

And this mutual Forgiveness, is a Duty of strict Obligation, both as it is comprehended in the Law against Murder, and as it is a necessary Qualification for the due Performance of religious Worship, and indeed an essential Branch of all Religion.

*First*, I say it is comprehended in the Law against Murder. For the Prohibition of Murder must in all Reason be construed so as to extend to all such Provocations, Insults, or Injuries, as are apt to transport Men to Revenge, or at least to beget that habitual Malice which is directly guilty of all the deliberate Wickedness and Cruelty of Murder, excepting the very Act of Execution, from which too those that are malicious and revengeful are withheld, more by the Terror of the Law, than the Horror of the Sin, i. e. more by the Fear of Man, than of God.

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And therefore it is expressly forbidden, *Levit. xix. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine Heart*, of which that Passage in *St. John 1 Ep. iii. 15.* may serve as the Comment, that, *Whosoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer.* i. e. He is so in Will and Intention, tho' perhaps he has not the Hardiness to commit the Fact, and therefore in God's all-seeing Eye who knows the Bent and Temper of his Soul, he passes for no other. And if so, if hatred be enough to denominate a Man a Murderer, then he is guilty of the same Crime, that offers any Contempt or Indignity or Wrong to his Brother, and persists in so doing without any Reparation or Satisfaction, or other Indication of Repentance: because such injurious Practices must needs proceed from a malicious, i. e. a murderous Disposition. And so is he also, that upon a Provocation once received, will not be satisfied with any Recompence, nor mollified with any Submission, but is resolved to have his Revenge. For it is his inveterate Hatred that makes him so keen upon Revenge: if he had any Love for his Brother, he would be disposed upon reasonable Terms (sure to forgive him, but he perfectly

perfectly hates him, and therefore he will be revenged of him if he can, and he would murder if he durst. From hence therefore I conclude that mutual Charity and Forgiveness is an obligatory Duty, because it is virtually comprehended in the Law against Murder, of which the contrary Practices are a manifest Violation. But

2dly, It is also obligatory as it is a necessary Qualification for the due and acceptable Performance of religious Worship. Now the outward Rites of religious Worship (both under the Law and the Gospel) were instituted by God, not for their own Sake, as if there were any real Efficacy in such or such Words or Acts or Modes and Circumstances, but only as suitable Expressions of the inward Sentiments and devout Affections of the Worshipper.

For Instance, the *Levitical* Sacrifices did by the slaying of a Beast significantly, express the Sense the Sinner had of his own Demerit, implying withall a most humble Supplication that God, according to his own Appointment, would be graciously pleased to transfer the Punishment due to himself upon the Beast that was slain, and that thereby his

SERM. Guilt might be expiated. Thus Prayer  
 VIII. implies and confesses a reverential Acknowledgment of God's Omnipotence, and Omnipresence, and infinite Goodness and Mercy, and the Rest of his Attributes, together with our entire Dependance and Reliance upon him for the Supply of all our Wants, and for that, which of all Things we most stand in Need of, the Forgiveness of our Sins. So Praise sets forth our profound Adoration of all God's glorious Perfections, and our Thankfulness for the Receipt of all his manifold Mercies, especially that Forgiveness, which is the most conspicuous of them all, and reflects the greatest Glory upon the Author of it.

But Sacrifices never were, nor was it possible they should be acceptable to God, when unaccompanied with a penitent Sorrow for Sins past, and a Purpose of future Obedience, because this was the significant Use, and real End of their Institution, and without it they were but empty insignificant Ceremonies.

And so Prayer and Praise are in Effect but so much Lip-Labour, when not attended with the Apprehensions and Affections aforementioned. For God the *Searcher of Hearts*



does principally respect the Heart; and if the Heart be far from him, it is in vain to draw nigh him with our Mouth, or honour him with our Lips. For all that out-side Devotion is but meer Pageantry, or rather downright Mockery.

And among all the pious Dispositions of Soul that are requisite to qualify us for God's Worship, none more inseparably necessary, than that of Charity and Forgiveness, as, upon a slight Attention, the Reason of the Thing will show.

For how, or in what Manner soever we address our selves unto God, whether it be with the *Sacrifice of a contrite Heart*, and the Deprecations of a Penitent, or with the *Calves of our Lips*, and the Hymns of Thanksgiving, there is in every Part of his Worship, properly so called, a constant Respect to his forgiving Mercy, together with the Need we have of it, and the Hopes we have in it.

And certainly it is of all Things the most equitable for God to require, and the most reasonable in itself, that those who are themselves earnest Suitors for Mercy, and must perish everlastingly without it, should be ready also, in their Turn, to shew Mercy to their

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Brethren, that those who contemplate with Wonder, the inexhaustible Riches of God's Mercy, should express their Gratitude too by imitating to their Power, what they cannot sufficiently admire, and endeavouring to be *merciful, as their Father which is in Heaven is merciful.*

This is so very evident, that there is no Body that thinks of it at all, but must discern the Force and Reason of the Obligation, no Body but must own it to be his bounden Duty, and as being a Qualification so indispensably required for the due Performance of God's Worship, that there is no Hope of Acceptance, no Foundation of Comfort or Assurance without it. Nay, it is a desperate Presumption to reckon upon any. For as the Wise Son of *Sirach* very pathetically expostulates, Eccles. xxviii. 1, 2, 3, 4. *One Man beareth Hatred against another, and doth he seek Pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no Mercy to a Man that is like himself, and doth he ask Forgiveness of his own Sins? No, no! That's not to be expected! He that revengeth shall find Vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain that Man's Sins. But forgive thy Neighbour that hath hurt thee,*

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*of making Satisfaction.*

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(give me Leave to add and endeavour to be reconciled to him if thou hast injured him) SERM.  
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so (and not otherwise) *shalt thou be forgiven when thou mayest.* Hence therefore I conclude again that there is a strict Obligation to mutual Charity and Forgiveness, because we cannot render unto God any *reasonable* or *acceptable Service* without it. But

3dly, We shall be farther convinced that we are obliged hereunto in Point of Duty, if we consider, that it is indeed a most essential Branch of all Religion, not only as it expresses itself outwardly in some certain Form of Worship, but as it is intrinsically resolved into the great fundamental Principle, the Love of God. This (says our Saviour, *Matt. xxii. 38.*) *is the first and great Commandment*, and yet the *second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as Thyself.* And the Affinity is so great between the two, that nothing can dissolve the Connection. For he that loves God in the Sincerity of his Soul, will certainly love his Neighbour too, as bearing the same Image of God, and being equally the Object of his merciful Providence with himself. And he that does unfeignedly love his Neighbour, as God has commanded, will

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much

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much more love God for his own Sake, as being the Author of all that can appear amiable in his Creatures. And St. *John* tells us, (1 Ep. iv. 20.) *If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar: For he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?* i. e. He who is apparently defective in so easy and familiar an Instance of Duty, so small a Token of his Love towards God, cannot have the Confidence to pretend to any Elevations of Affection, nor the more abstracted Degrees of spiritual Love, the Object of which and the Motives to which are neither of them presented to his Senses.

And as it is a Vanity to say or think that the Love of God can stand separate from the Love of our Neighbour, so it is as vain to imagine, that a Man may *really* love his Neighbour, without being desirous to be reconciled and to make some competent Satisfaction for any Injury done to him, and without being ready to meet him half Way again upon Occasion, when he comes with the like Request and the like Offer. For most undoubtedly when Men neither care to forgive nor be forgiven, they do actually live



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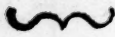
in a State of Variance and Enmity, and not of Love and Friendship. And if any Man seem to be religious, and yet cannot conquer this fullen and inflexible Temper of his own, That Man's Religion is vain, as being inconsistent with the grand Principle of all Religion, the Love of God, which is also inseparable from our Love to our Brethren. And since our Love to the Brotherhood cannot be maintained without mutual Charity and Forgiveness, that likewise must be allowed to be an essential Part of Religion, and consequently a Duty strictly binding.

I proceed now

Secondly, In the second Place to shew that Christians are more peculiarly under the Obligation of this Duty, and that especially, as it is a necessary Qualification in Order to the worthy Receiving of the Lord's Supper. And

1<sup>st</sup>, If we consider it as a Duty of Christianity at large, it will derive a peculiar Obligation upon us from the very Nature of the Gospel Covenant. For the Gospel is a Covenant of Grace and Peace, and the great Instrument of Reconciliation between God and Man. The Mediator of this Covenant was ushered

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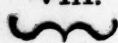
ushered into the World with a joyful Proclamation of Angels, declaring the Purport of his Ministry in these magnificent Words, *Glorify be to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men*: [Luke ii. 14.] And St. Peter says (*Acts v. 31.*) *That God exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to Israel and Remission of Sins.* He declares himself, that his *Blood*, upon which this new Covenant was established, *was shed for many for the Remission of Sins.* (*Matt. xxvi. 28.*) And the Tenor of his Commission to his Disciples upon his Departure is, (*Luke xxiv. 47.*) *That Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins should be preached in his Name, among all Nations.* And pursuant hereunto, St. Paul tells the *Corinthians* (2 Ep. Ch. v. 18, 19.) in the Name of himself and the Rest of the Apostles, *That all Things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given* (says he) *to us the Ministry of Reconciliation.* To wit; (as he repeats it in the Verse following) *That God was in Christ, reconciling the World to himself; not imputing their Trespases unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation.* And the same Doctrine he delivers

delivers

delivers to the *Colossians* (i. 19, 20.) with much Solemnity. *For it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all Fullness dwell; And (having made Peace through the Blood of his Cross) by him to reconcile all Things to himself, by him, I say, whether they be Things in Earth, or Things in Heaven.*

Now the Inference from these and the like important Passages is as easy, as the Obligation is strong and firm (thence arising) namely that, since the Love of God is so astonishingly great in the *Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ*, since the Terms of our Reconciliation in and thro' him, are so exceeding gracious, and since the Privilege of Repentance and Forgiveness tendered to us in his Gospel, does so vastly surpass all possible Estimation, that we are under the most peculiar Ties, and the strictest, as well as the most endearing Engagements, to *love one another, as God loved us, and to put on (as the Elect of God, holy and beloved) Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave us, so should we do also.* (*Coloss. iii. 12, &c.*) But

2dly,

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2dly, The Obligation to this mutual Forbearance and Forgiveness will fit still faster and closer upon the Conscience of every good *Christian*, if we consider it as one special Qualification necessarily required in Order to the worthy Receiving of the Lord's Supper; which several of the Ancients (as Mr. Mede observes) did suppose to be pointed at by Way of Anticipation, in the Words of my Text, which Sacred Service (according to that learned Author, Vol. I. p. 453.) does consist in an Oblation of Thanksgiving and Prayer, commemorative of the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, upon the Cross, represented under the Symbols of Bread and Wine, first solemnly dedicated to God, and sanctified by his Divine Benediction. So that the whole Design of this Holy Mystery is to offer our Sacrifice of Praise, for the Means of Grace afforded to us in Christ Jesus, and thankfully to commemorate the infinite Efficacy, and Merit of his propitiatory Sacrifice in our Behalf, and in Remembrance of him to commend our Devotions unto God, with full Assurance of Faith, that through these visible Pledges of his most Blessed Body and Blood, we shall be mystically made Partakers



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of the Remission of our Sins, and his abundant Grace, and all other Benefits of his Passion.

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From hence therefore I infer it as a necessary Consequence, that in Order to make our selves worthy Communicants, and to commemorate aright the Cross and Passion of Christ, and fix our Faith intensely upon him, who thus died for us, and raise our Hopes to a comfortable Expectation of the gracious Effects of his Death in the Pardon of our Sins and the Salvation of our Souls, I say in Order to this, we are most certainly under the strictest and the deepest Obligations to suffer Christ to be the Reconciler of all our Differences, and to *be in perfect Charity with all Men*, (even our worst Enemies) for his Sake, and to enter into a Holy League of Amity and the Bonds of spiritual Union with all our Fellow *Christians*, that as we are all *Partakers of that one Bread*, being many we may become one Bread and one Body. This I say, among others, must needs be looked upon as a most indispensable Qualification if we would approve ourselves *meet Partakers of the Holy Mysteries*, and the Blessings therein conveyed. And accordingly it was the Practice

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Practice in the earliest *Liturgies* of the *Christian Church*, that when the *Offertory* was beginning, it should be proclaimed by a Deacon to the whole Congregation. *Μή τις καλέσῃ*, Let no Man have ought against his Brother, that so they might from that Moment at least be perfectly reconciled to one another, and approach God's sacred Altar in entire Friendship and Unity. And sure we must be the most ungrateful of Men, and the most irreclaimable of Sinners, if the Contemplation of the awful Mysteries, and the Commemoration of such astonishing Mercies, be not sufficient to allay our Passion, and heal our Animosities, and engage us *to forgive, as we hope to be forgiven*. It remains now

*Thirdly*, That I shew that the Omission of so great and so necessary a Point of our *Christian Duty*, is utterly inexcusable in the Sight of God.

And this is manifestly enough implied in the latter Part of my Text. *Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the Way with him*. And what is the Motive? *Left thy Adversary at any Time deliver thee to the Judge*,

Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. And what's the Consequence of That? *Verily I say unto you* (says our blessed Lord) *Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.* Plainly meaning, that as the insolvent Debtor is with us confined to perpetual Imprisonment, so the uncharitable Person [He that is pertinaciously so, and is too big when he has once done a Wrong, to come to any Terms of Accommodation] shall be condemned to eternal Punishment. Not to purgatory Flames, as the *Papists* fondly dream, in which he is to remain till Satisfaction is made for his Sin, and then to be released, as they imagine those Words import, *Till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing*: Whereas 'tis impossible for such a one by all that he can suffer, to satisfy infinite Justice, he cannot discharge the whole Debt of Punishment, and therefore he can hope for no Relaxation. In like Manner the sad and irrevocable Doom of the unmerciful and implacable Man is most terribly set forth in that Parable in St. *Matthew* (xviii<sup>th</sup>) of the ungrateful Servant, who after his Lord had nobly forgiven him a Debt of ten thousand

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thousand Talents, went immediately and took his fellow Servant by the Throat, and haled him to Prison, only for *one hundred Pence*. And what followed thereupon? why his Lord was moved to insist again upon his first and just Demand, (Ver. 34.) *He was wroth, and delivered him to the Torturers, till he should pay all that was due to him.* The Application of which is very dreadful, (Ver. 35.) *So also* (says the compassionate Jesus, but no longer so to those who have precluded themselves from his Mercy) *shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases.*

And in the Nature of the Thing it appears, that Uncharitableness or Unmercifulness, willfully persisted in, is a Sin that forfeits all Title to the Mercy of God. For it amounts to a bold and obstinate Refusal of the very Terms of Salvation, as we may gather from what occurs, (*Matthew vi. 14 and 15.*) *If ye forgive Men their Trespases, then will your heavenly Father also forgive you. But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.* Whence it follows, that, since this



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is the gracious Condition of our Pardon, he that is implacable, either when he has received an Injury, or (which is frequently the Case) even when he hath done one, desperately rejects the very Terms upon which he should be saved, he is resolved not to forgive, and therefore he shall not, he cannot be forgiven.

And such a Man's Case is so much the more deplorable, because his *Physick* is his Poison, and the Means of his Recovery (to such a depraved Constitution) prove *baneful* in the Use.

He can hardly have the Heart to pray, or if he does, his very Prayer is turned into Cursing, and that admirable Petition in our Lord's Prayer, *Forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors*, proves like Gall and Wormwood in his Mouth, it returns with Vengeance on his own Pate, and exposes him to the greater Condemnation. He cares not to approach the holy Sacrament; the Leaven of his Malice is too sour for a Feast of Love; or if he does presume to come, he profanes the whole Solemnity; he takes the consecrated Elements without Faith, and without Love. He commemorates Christ's

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precious Death without Thankfulness. He distinguishes not the Lord's Body from common Food. Nay, in Effect he *treads under Foot the Son of God, and counts the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy Thing, and does despite to the Spirit of Grace.* And therefore, as the Apostle also infers, (*Heb. x. 28, 29.*) if *He that despised the Law of Moses, died without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy* who is guilty of so horrible a Prophanation? In one Word, The Sin of Uncharitableness is inexcusably great in the Sight of God, unless done away by a deep and bitter Repentance; and 'tis a Sin that is under the greater Indisposition to repent, because it either cares not to use at all, or else abuses and defeats the most powerful Means of Grace that God in Mercy has afforded us.

I shall now only make a brief Reflection or two, that happened not to fall in so well in the *Series* of my Discourse, and so conclude.

1<sup>st</sup>, Then it is observable, that Christ has hitherto made no Addition to the Law, but only

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only rescued it from the false or lame Interpretation of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*. For upon Examination it has appeared, that even that Pitch of Charity and mutual Forgiveness which he here requires, is comprehended in the Law against Murder. For Hatred is in all reasonable Construction no better than intentional Murder, and there is no *Medium* between downright Hatred, and Averseness to Reconciliation, or not forgiving.

2dly, It may be observed, to prevent a needless Scruple in well-disposed Minds, that tho' Charity and Forgiveness is indispensably required to make us worthy Communicants at the Lord's Supper, yet 'tis the Substance of the Duty, and the good Intention of the Communicant, and not the Circumstance or Success of his Application, that is chiefly to be regarded. My Meaning is, that a Man is not literally obliged to go immediately from the Lord's Table, and address himself to his offended Brother to reconcile the Difference between them. It is sufficient that he resolves, if he has not had the Opportunity before, to seek it without Delay, and embrace it as soon as it shall offer. And in the mean Time, if he sends his hearty good

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Wishes, and his cordial Affections towards him, the God, *to whom all Hearts be open, and all Desires known*, will accept of this his charitable Disposition, and admit him as a welcome Guest at his Feast of Charity. And so likewise, if a Man should make his Applications in vain, and his Proposals of Reconciliation should be scornfully rejected, this ought to be no Discouragement to him, nor any Interruption to his Devotion. For his Charity is never the less, nor the less acceptable to God, (but in Truth, much the more so) for being so ill entertained, and exercised with a fresh Trial.

3dly and lastly, It may also be observed, that tho' Charity is a necessary Qualification in order to worthy receiving, yet the Want of Charity is no justifiable Reason for our total absenting from the Lord's Supper. The Text says indeed, *If thou bringest thy Gift to the Altar, and there rememberest that thy Brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy Gift, and go thy way, and first be reconciled to thy Brother.* But after that thy Return is expected, for it is added, *and then, (when thou art so qualified) come and offer thy Gift.* For Shame therefore never let it  
more



more be said by any one, (as perhaps sometimes it has) I am at Variance with my Neighbour, and in short, I cannot tell how to be Friends with him, and therefore I must be excused from coming to the Sacrament.

Excused! So far from it, wretched Man as thou art, that this thy Excuse is it self a grievous Crime, and will increase thy Condemnation! For what does it amount to in *plain English*? Is it not as much as to say, I must be excused for disobeying God's Commandment, because I have been provoked truly, and put out of Humour. I must be excused for neglecting God's solemn Worship, because I can't find in my Heart to qualify my self for it, as he has required. I must be excused, if I am not so forward to sue for, or accept that Forgiveness, which my dying Saviour purchased for me, because I cannot prevail with my self to forgive my Brother who has offended. The Condition is so unreasonably hard, I cannot comply with it.

Perhaps it will be thought that no Man ever ventured to express his Mind so freely upon the Occasion; and it may be so, but yet if any owns himself not to be in Charity,

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and makes use of that as his Apology for not Communicating, this, shocking as it may seem, is his Meaning truly expounded. Oh! therefore let none of us first banish Charity out of our own Hearts, and then upon that Pretence wilfully deprive our selves of the Benefit of the *Holy Eucharist*. For that which we would have to excuse us from the Blessed Sacrament now, will certainly exclude us from Heaven hereafter; and make us liable to be cast into that Prison, whence *we can by no Means come out till we have paid the uttermost Farthing*: And where we must remain, (since 'tis impossible in that State to satisfy God's infinite Justice) as insolvent Debtors to all Eternity.



SERMON



## S E R M O N IX.

The Retaliation of Injuries forbidden  
by our Saviour.



MATT. v. 38, 39, 40, 41.

*We have heard that it hath been said,  
An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth  
for a Tooth. (Ex. xxi. 24. Lev. xxiv.  
20. Deut. xix. 21.) But I say unto  
you, that ye resist not Evil: But  
whosoever shall smite thee on thy  
right Cheek, turn to him the other  
also. And if any Man will sue  
thee at Law and take away thy  
Coat,*



*Coat, let him have thy Cloak also  
And whosoever shall compel thee  
to go a Mile, go with him twain.*

**I**N the 21st and 22d Verses of this Chapter, our Blessed Lord has laid a strict Prohibition upon all rash and unreasonable Anger, together with that rude Contempt and Reproach, in which it is too apt to vent itself. And in Case of any Offence in that Kind, he has laid as strict a Charge upon the Offender to make immediate Satisfaction for the Injury, and all possible Overtures towards a Reconciliation. *If thou bring thy Gift (says he) to the Altar, and there rememberest that thy Brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift, &c.*

Which is a plain Direction, what the proper Duty is of those Men, who have given their Neighbours any indecent Provocation, or treated them injuriously; namely, timely Application, Submission, Reparation, and whatever else is feasible or fit to be done, in order



*forbidden by our Saviour.*

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order to pacify the Party offended, and make SER. IX.  
up the Difference.

This is the best way to compensate for an injury (once done) and to bring the Matter to a peaceable Issue, without farther Breach of Charity, or the Temptation of calling in deliberate Malice, to abet the first injurious Practice, and second it with more Mischief.

But the Words which I have chosen for my present Subject, do furnish us with another very useful Direction, and that is, how to bear Injuries patiently, when at any Time they fall to our Share, without any violent, or unnecessary, or unjustifiable Opposition, or any Kind of malicious Retaliation; for which the *Scribes and Pharisees*, (whose chief Dexterity seems to have been in perverting God's Commandments) had left but too much Scope, by putting the Execution of a very wholesome Law too much into the Power of private Hands, and setting the Letter at variance with the Reason and Intention of it.

*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth.* Which are indeed the Words of a very just and charitable Law, tho' perversly made instrumental

SER. IX. instrumental to your Malice and Revenge. But

*I say unto you, (quite contrary to this your Misperuasion) that ye resist not Evil: But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any Man will sue thee at Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.*

And that these Words of Christ may not be either through Ignorance or Disingenuity mistaken or eluded by *Us* that are *Christians*, I shall now make it my Business,

*First*, To lay down some Observations that may help towards a right understanding of 'em.

*Secondly*, To state and explain the Doctrine therein delivered.

*Thirdly*, To shew that this Doctrine is highly reasonable in it self. And,

*Fourthly*, That 'tis no less consistent with the Law of *Moses*.

*First*, First I shall lay down some Observations that may help towards a right understanding of the Words; and to that Purpose let it be observed,

*forbidden by our Saviour.*

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1<sup>st</sup>, That these Words are neither in whole SER. IX.  
nor in part to be understood universally, and  
without all Restriction. We are forbidden  
indeed (and that indefinitely) *to resist Evil*;  
but it is not to be supposed, that this should  
debar us of the natural Right of Self-Prefer-  
vation. We may, no Doubt, provide for  
our own Safety notwithstanding, by all such  
Means as are proper, or reasonable, or ne-  
cessary; either by prudently avoiding the  
injury design'd against us, and with-drawing  
out of the Reach of Danger, (as our Saviour  
himself did, when he hid himself from the  
enraged Multitude that were about to stone  
him) or by meekly interceding, or stoutly re-  
monstrating, or seeking the Redress of the  
Law, where no other Remedy will take  
place, or even repelling Force by Force,  
where the Case is brought to that Extremi-  
ty, and all other Methods are impractica-  
ble.

In order therefore to a right understanding  
of these Words, we must distinguish between  
publick and private, lawful and unlawful, ne-  
cessary and unnecessary Resistance; because,  
as we shall find by and by, the one is, in  
due Circumstances, very fit to be allowed  
and

SER. IX. and practised, but the other is altogether irregular and unwarrantable.

2dly, It is also to be observed, that the particular Cases, in which our Non-resistance or patient Sufferance of Injuries is here required, are not to be construed strictly according to the Letter. For our Blessed Lord who was himself the perfectest Pattern of all that Meekness, and Patience, and Resignation, did not literally turn the other Cheek to the Officer that struck him with the Palm of his Hand, upon his Examination before Caiaphas.

No! But he replied, in Vindication of his own Innocence; and a just Sense of the Indignity, *If I have spoken Evil, bear witness of the Evil: But if well, Why smitest thou me? (John xviii. 23.)* And St. Paul, when Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the Mouth, returned upon him with Indignation, and denounced God's just Judgment against him for his unjust Proceedings. *God shall smite thee, thou whited Wall: For sittest thou here to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law? (Acts xxiii. 3)* And so likewise upon another Occasion



insisted upon his legal Privilege as a freeborn Citizen of Rome. *They have beaten us (says he) openly, and uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into Prison; and now, do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.* [Acts xvi. 37.]

The Instances therefore that are here alleged, are proverbial and allusive rather than literal, fitly representing to us what our Deportment ought to be under all Kind of Injuries that are any ways tolerable, in three apposite Cases, wherein our Honour, Property, and Liberty (three tender Points indeed) are very nearly concerned.

The first, a Blow upon the Cheek, is not only a personal Assault, but 'tis also a contemptuous Affront, and was finable as such according to the Law of the Twelve Tables, in twenty-five *Roman Farthings*. And *Aulus Gellius* tells us of one <sup>a</sup> *Lucius Veratius*,

<sup>a</sup> *A. Gellii*, Noct. Attic. Lib. 20. Cap. 1. P. 537. Quidam inquit *Lucius Veratius* fuit, egregiè homo improbus, atque immani vecordia. Is pro delectamento habebat, Os Hominis Liberi Manus suæ palmâ verberare. Eum Servus sequebatur crumenam plenam assium portitans: Et quemcumque depal-maverat, numerari statim secundum Duodecim Tabulas, viginti & quinque asses jubebat.

SER. IX. an insolent Fellow that took a singular Pleasure in insulting every Body he met in this Fashion. And therefore to satisfy the Law, he had always a Servant with a Bag behind him, to be ready to pay down the Fine. And the Scripture also takes Notice of it as a dishonourable Kind of Treatment, in that Passage in *Lamentations* iii. 30. *He giveth his Cheek to him that smiteth him, he is filled full with Reproach.* But even this Indignity, it seems, we are bound rather patiently to put up, than to return it with the like Insolence and Violence.

The second Instance is a direct Invasion of Property, under the Shelter and Colour of Law. But this also we ought quietly to submit to, even tho' it be to our further Damage, tho' we lose both *Coat and Cloak* too, rather than be engaged in a fierce Contention, and endanger the Loss of our *Christian Charity* in a vexatious Law-Suit.

The third Instance is an Usurpation upon Liberty, alluding to a customary Practice among the *Persians*, empowering, or at least suffering the Soldiers, upon an Expedition, to press not only Waggons and Cattle but Men also, to carry their Baggage after them.

them. An Oppression that the *Jews* were sufficiently sensible of, (as *Grotius* observes) in their Captivity, till such Time as they had an Immunity from it by the Favour of *Demetrius*. And yet even any Thing of this Nature they must be contented to bear, if they will be the Disciples of Christ, and so must all we that are called by his Name, rather than make a boisterous Opposition. But

3dly, It is farther to be observed, that the general Scope and Aim of the Speaker is chiefly to be regarded, without being over-nice in examining the particular Words and Phrases. Now it is evident enough from the whole Tenour of this Chapter, that our Saviour opposes himself to the false Glosses of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; whereby they not only obscured but corrupted the Text; and here in particular to some loose Interpretation of theirs of the Law of Retaliation, whereby they had given up the Reins too much to private Revenge. His main Design therefore is to lay an effectual Restraint upon a Principle so destructive to Men's Peace and Safety as this of Revenge, and to recommend to them the contrary Virtues of Con-

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stancy and Patience, Forbearance and Forgiveness. And if we keep but this in Mind, it will serve as a Key to let us into the true Meaning of each particular Expression; and to resolve those Difficulties that may otherwise perplex the Sence. And having observed thus much in Order to a right Understanding of the Text, I now proceed

*Secondly*, To state and explain the Doctrine therein delivered. And the Doctrine in short amounts to this, that the patient enduring of Injuries is a necessary Duty, so far as the Thing is in any wise fairly practicable, or the Damage tolerable, but that the Study and Practice of Revenge is *in no Case* allowable or excusable.

This is what will soon be cleared up upon a Re-examination of the several Particulars of the Text. *But I say unto you*, this is my direct Injunction (*speaking as one that had Authority, and not like the Scribes and Pharisees*) *that ye resist not Evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also.* That is arm thy self with Patience, and be prepared rather to receive a second Blow than to return the first.

Thy



Thy Enemy indeed is the unjust Aggressor, SERM.  
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and has rudely insulted thee; but consider what prompted him to it, his Passion and his Malice. But let not his Rage baffle thy Resolution; let not his Example transport thee to a violent Revenge. For then thou art plainly *overcome of Evil*, thou art altogether as furious and malicious as he himself is.

The plain Truth of the Case is this; it is base and unworthy Usage to be buffeted in the Face; but if a Man be furnished with that true *Christian Fortitude* called *Patience*, the Smart is not great, nor will the Disgrace be lasting. Whereas, if a Man will make his fullen Resentment, the Judge in his own Cause, and his Fist or his Sword the Avenger, then both the Assailant and Defendant, are so far equally to blame, as they each of them unnecessarily break the Peace, and fight with the like unlawful Weapons. It appears therefore thus far at least that Patience under Injuries is a necessary Duty, where they are any Thing tolerable, because we cannot preserve our Innocence without it: And on the other Hand, that a revengeful Retaliation of them, is in all Cases a Sin,

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because it can never be reconciled to the Law of Justice or Charity.

But how if the Tameness of the Sufferer should add to the Scorn and Fury of the Persecutor, and tempt him to use him still more injuriously and more insolently? Why that is a little unnatural to suppose. But yet, though it is probable our Lord might foresee and have an Eye to this Objection, he thought not fit to abate of the Strictness of his Law; nor was there any Reason he should; for Patience is still the best Armour, and the only Safeguard: And let a Man be never so ill treated by his Fellow-Creature, this ought not to be a Provocation, it cannot be a Warrant for him to usurp upon his God, by taking that *Vengeance* into his own Hands which is only *his Divine Prerogative*. But suppose a Man has to do with an Enemy so outrageous and implacable, that nothing will satisfy him but Blood; must he be passive still, even when the Attempt is directly made upon his own Life? No! The Case is then brought to an extreme Point. For Life is a Man's last and great Stake; and besides the Interest that the Commonwealth, or his Friends and Relations

tions may have in it, his eternal Well-being depends upon it. This Injury therefore is both irreparable and insupportable, and no proper Exercise for Patience.

What then? Is there now at last Room for Revenge? No! For Revenge always proceeds from Ill-will, and aims at Mischief, and executes it with a cruel Sort of Pleasure. Whereas in the Case now before us, the Man is supposed to be driven to a sad Extremity, and to be forced upon that Self-defence, which, if I mistake not, Nature, Reason, and Religion do all require at his Hands. He must do therefore what he is under both a Necessity and an Obligation of doing; he cannot but desire, and he ought most certainly to endeavour to save his own Life. If he can do it without endangering his Adversary, it is a happy Advantage that he ought not to forego; if not, the Blood must rest upon his Head, *who* so furiously thirsted after it. But

2dly, To descend to the next Instance, our Saviour's Injunction runs thus. *If any Man will sue thee at Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also.* Which is to be understood not precisely according to

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the Letter, but in such a Latitude as may extend to all Cases of the like Nature, or that fall under the same Reason and Proportion. It is a Remark indeed of *Beza's* that the Word *κρίθῆναι* which we translate [*to sue at Law*] may possibly be meant of any private Quarrel or Contention between Man and Man, tho' not brought into a Court of Justice; designing, I suppose, to ward off an Objection against the Lawfulness of human Judicature. But there was no great need I think of taking Refuge in this Criticism: That Practice is sufficiently defensible upon other Reasons: and in the mean time, I doubt, we must allow, that Patience is as much a Duty, and Revenge as much a Sin in such Cases as are cognizable by the Law, as in any other whatsoever.

The least therefore that can be concluded from our Saviour's Words is this, that if it should be one's Misfortune to live by such a contentious Neighbour, as is perpetually disposed to dispute even Matters of undoubted Right, and by Strength of Purse, and force the Law to be the unwilling Instrument of his Injustice and Oppression; I say in such a Case it is a Man's Duty, I reckon, to recede some-  
times



times from a Point of Right, where it may conveniently be parted with, and pocket Wrong silently if it be not very detrimental, rather than to be embroiled in perpetual Quarrels, and never to be Master of his own Tranquillity. And, if he cannot purchase his Peace at so easy a Rate, yet he must be sure to keep out of the Contagion of the ill Example, he must be sure not to shew himself *froward with the froward*, and whatever he is defrauded of, he must not suffer himself to be robbed of his Patience and his Charity; for that is a Treasure that will stand him in great stead, if once he should be necessitated to seek his Redress by Law.

I say if he should be necessitated to seek his Redress by Law. For tho' some wild *Enthusiasts* have sometimes made it a Dispute whether the Law itself may lawfully be used, yet I should think it can be no serious Question among *Christians*. For the Ordinance is God's, the Judgment is God's; and so the Scriptures declare it to be. And in the Nature of the Thing, the equal Dispensation of Justice according to Law, is a Work both of Mercy and Necessity. Of Mercy, as it affords Relief to the innocent and the in-

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jured : of Necessity, as it decides all Matters of Right and Trespas, and puts an End to all Controversies, without which, the Community could not subsist in any Peace or good Order.

And without all Doubt, there are particular Cases enough, wherein it is not only justifiable but even necessary and commendable to make Use of such Remedy as the Law has provided ; as when a Man's Property is invaded in some considerable Branch of it, the Want of which would be sensibly felt in his Family, when his Reputation is wounded in some very tender Point, when it is requisite to the faithful Discharge of some important Trust, when the Rights of the Poor are encroached upon, and in many other Instances of the like Nature. Nor is it to be thought, that by making this Concession, I have yielded up the main Point, as if Patience were a Duty that is sometimes to be dispensed with, and Revenge a Practice that might sometimes be allowed. For it is possible, sure enough, for a Man to assert his own Right without the Forfeiture of his Charity or his Patience : it is possible to sue for legal Reparation, without meditating upon

Revenge. The Law is void of all Manner of Passion, Partiality and Malice: and so should he that has just Occasion to use it, But to fly to it out of Spight and Vexation, to make it subservient to our Avarice and Extortion, to make it the Cover of our Knavery, and the Engine of Mischief is a most notorious Abuse: And it is against such Abuses as this, that this part of the Precept is chiefly levelled, as being the manifest Effects either of Impatience, or uncharitable downright Dishonesty. But

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3dly, It is further enjoined, *Whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain*: That is submit to this or the like Abridgment of thy Liberty, so long as the Inconvenience is not great: And however uneasy the Yoke may be to thee, yet still submit to it, rather than give the least Loose to Revenge. But I need not enlarge upon this, because it is reducible to the Rules already given, and the same Reasons will conclude it, in Conformity to the Doctrine I have been hitherto stating and explaining. viz. That the patient enduring of Injuries, is a necessary Duty, so far as the Thing is fairly practicable, or the Damage in any wise tolerable,

SERM. tolerable, but that the Study and Practice  
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*Thirdly*, To shew that this Doctrine is highly reasonable in itself. And the Reasonableness of it will appear in Brief, *1<sup>st</sup>*, From the infinite Patience of God towards us. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, From his over-ruling Power and Prerogative. *3<sup>dly</sup>*, From the immediate good Fruits of this Virtue of Patience and Meekness in ourselves. *4<sup>thly</sup>*, From the great Blessings, to which it is entitled hereafter.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, From the infinite Patience of God towards us. For our Sins against him, are infinitely more and more provoking, than any Injuries that we can possibly receive from our Brethren; and yet *he is not extreme to mark what we do amiss*, he often spares when he might punish, and corrects us in his loving Kindness, when he might consume us in his Anger; and in one Word he strives with us as it were to make us capable of his Forgiveness and his Favour, and gives up none to Destruction, but such as are utterly irreclaimable. And surely the Consideration of this his unspeakable Goodness and long Suffering, cannot



not but make us sensible, that it is of all Things the most equitable and reasonable, that we also should bear a great deal from our Brethren, and forbear them a great while, *Forgive them*, at last, *even as God for Christ's Sake has forgiven us*, and we trust will finally forgive us.

2dly, This appears still to be more reasonable from the Contemplation of God's Prerogative and over-ruling Power. For he has declared himself to be the God *to whom Vengeance and Recompence belongeth*. And however the Wicked may dare to condemn him, and flatter themselves, that he will not require it, yet with his vigilant Eye he beholdeth their Mischief and Spite, to requite it with his Hand. It is an Act therefore of the highest Reason, as well as an Exercise of Faith and Charity, for the Injured and Oppressed to commit their Cause to him, who has more particularly charged his Providence with these Matters, and has stiled himself *the Helper of the Friendless*.

3dly, This is further evident from the immediate good Fruits of the Virtues of Patience and Meekness in ourselves, which do consist partly in the inward Composure of Mind,

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 Mind, and partly in the outward Tranquility that generally attends it. For certainly nothing puts a Man so much in Possession of himself, and spreads so sweet a Calm over the Soul: Nothing is so much superior to, so secure from the Malice of Men and Devils, as this happy Temper. Nor, ordinarily speaking, can there be any better Provision for Peace and Safety. For beside that *still* Enjoyment which a Man feels within his own Breast, there is something so winning and engaging, so powerful and subduing in the Spirit of Meekness, that is able to disarm and oftentimes perfectly vanquishes the most obstinately malicious. At least, it is much a better Fence against Injuries than Impatience, and a Thirst after Revenge. For that ruffles a Man's Thoughts, and puts him off his Guard; and not only so, but it multiplies the Mischief, and makes every little Affront end in a War, and turns every Injury into a Calamity; all which might be happily prevented, or soon put an End to, by the easier Way of Suffering, and Forgiving, and so Conquering.

4thly, Add to all this the great Blessing that it is entitled to hereafter. For this is the

*forbidden by our Saviour.*

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the easy Condition of obtaining God's Pardon, if we suffer patiently and forgive heartily, *God also will forgive us our Trespases.* Nay, as *St. Peter* assures us, (*1 Pet. ii. 19.*) *This is acceptable with God, and in his Account, thankworthy. For even hereunto were we called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps; who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:* And if we also can be contented to commit our Souls to his keeping in well-doing, and wrongful suffering, we shall likewise be *Partakers of the Glory that shall be revealed, and receive a Crown that fadeth not away.*

*Fourthly,* It remains only that I shew that this Doctrine is very well consistent with the Law of *Moses*, concerning *Retaliation*, and pursuant to the main Design of it.

That Law indeed does expressly say (*Deut. xix. 21.*) *Thine Eye shall not pity, but Life shall go for Life, Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth, Hand for Hand, Foot for Foot.* But this

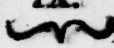
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this is only a Direction to the *Magistrate* in the Distribution of publick Justice, and the Execution of the Punishment allotted; but it is no Permission to any private Man to wreak his Spleen and Spite upon his Enemy. And therefore there is no Contrariety between this Law, and the Precept of the Text, which is wholly directed against private Revenge, and not legal Prosecution, where a Man is necessarily put upon it in his own Defence, without any Intention or Desire to aggrieve or annoy his Adversary.

Besides the primary Design of the Law of *Moses*, was no other indeed than to lay a Restraint upon Men's Lusts and Passions, and keep them from injuring and insulting their Neighbours, lest the *Magistrate* appointed by God for this very End should repay them in their own Kind, and the Vengeance should light upon their own Pate. Nor is the Power of the *Christian Magistrate* suspended in this Respect: For even still, not only Murderers, but other Malefactors are legally condemned to die, (which exceeds the Proportion of the *Lex Talionis* strictly so called) and yet no Body I believe can entertain any reasonable Scruple, as if there



there were any Repugnance in this Practice SERM.  
either to the Laws of *Christianity* or natural IX.  
Justice. 

In short, the Intent of the Law was to tie up the Hands of private Persons by allowing a legal Retaliation, and empowering the Magistrate to see it executed. And as the Law is void of all Passion and Partiality, so is the Magistrate presumed to be too. Otherwise, if he misapplies the Power reposed in him, and makes the Law subservient to his own little Piques and Resentments, in that Case the publick Justice with the Execution of which he is entrusted, commences no better than private Revenge, which is in no Degree countenanced by the Law, any more than it is by the Gospel.

I shall conclude this Discourse with a serious, and but too seasonable Reflection upon our degenerate Practice. It must be allowed, it cannot be denied, I think, if there be any Truth or Weight in what has been hitherto said, that Meekness and Patience, Forbearance and Forgiveness, are the most peculiar and distinguishing Duties of the Christian Religion; Duties which tho' always reasonable in themselves, and not without their

SERM. IX.  their Obligation from the Law of *Moses*, yet never were they proposed upon such reasonable and equitable, never pressed by such powerful Motives, never enforced by such a noble Pattern as under the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet, if we look abroad into the World, or at Home in our own Breasts, where, oh where shall we find any Disposition to put them in Practice?

For tho' Liberty and Property be the *English* Subjects boasted Privilege, yet every Brother will utterly supplant, and every Man encroach upon his Neighbour. And tho' Peace and Union are in almost every Body's Mouth, yet many that talk most of it are the greatest Enemies to it, and the most ready for Battle. In a Word, there is so much unreasonable Resentment in private Conversation, and Faction and Animosity are carried so high, and prevail so much in the Publick; there are so many Instances of vexatious Law-suits and malicious Prosecutions, and all manner of revengeful and illegal *Retaliations* every where, and every Day to be met with, that the *Jews* themselves, who are scandalous to a Proverb, for the Want of Charity, could hardly be more uncharitable, nor the unnurtured *Heathens* more unfociable. And

And in Truth were a Stranger to the Gospel to come among us, and form his Judgment of its Precepts, only by what occurred to Observation in common Practice, he might well enough conclude, that it contained a general Licence for Revenge. Revenge of all Sorts and Degrees, not only *an Eye for an Eye, or a Tooth for a Tooth*, or even Blood for Blood, but the very Life and Soul of a Man, for every Trifle. For so in Effect it is. Men are so far from *turning the other Cheek*, or observing the Injunction of the Text in the most qualified Sense, that the least Omission in Point of Ceremony, the very Shadow of an Affront can hardly happen, but it is presently made a capital Cause, and committed to the Execution of the Sword, tho' in itself so very inconsiderable, that the Law could scarce have taken Cognizance of it. But, be the Provocation what it will, great or little, the immediate Appeal is to the Sword; and there is scarce any Man that wears one, that is so puny spirited upon the Occasion, but who will dare to usurp upon God's Prerogative, and desperately take the Vengeance into his own Hands, tho' at the same Time he pulls it upon his own

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Head. Nay, it is even a Scandal (absurd as it may sound) among *Christians*, for a Man to flinch back at the Apprehension of Damnation, whenever he is fairly invited to play the fatal Prize for it. And this profligate, this barbarous Custom (as I may justly call it) obtains among us, and is counted honourable, in Opposition both to the *Statute Book*, and the Bible. Tho' it can never indeed be excused or palliated, so long as this Text stands upon Record as a Testimony against all Manner of Revenge.

*Ye have heard, that it hath been said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth, but I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also: And if any Man will sue thee at Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also. And whosoever shall compell thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.*

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON





# S E R M O N X.

The Duty of keeping the Whole  
Law.



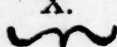
JAMES ii. 10.

*For whosoever shall keep the whole  
Law, and yet offend in one Point,  
he is guilty of all.*

**T**HIS Passage of Scripture was once SERM.  
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thought so hard to be resolved, that  
St. *Austin*, after having spent some  
Thoughts upon it *himself*, wrote a long Epif-  
tle to St. *Jerome* to desire him to help him  
thorough. But tho' we want that learned Fa-  
ther's Resolution (he inclining at that Time  
R 2 rather

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rather to acquiesce in St. *Austin's* Opinion than to advance any of his own) yet it is to be hop'd that the Light then given to it, together with the Observations and Enquiries of others since, may, if heedfully considered, be sufficient to clear up the Difficulties with which it is obscured, and to render it very useful and instructive. My present Business therefore shall be with God's Assistance, and these Helps,

*First*, To settle the true Meaning of the Text, and place it in its proper Light.

*Secondly*, To obviate some such Mistakes or Errors in Point of Doctrine as it may be thought to countenance.

*Thirdly*, To raise such Inferences in Order to Practice as it naturally affords.

*First*, And first I shall endeavour to settle the true Meaning of the Text, and place it in its proper Light. And to this Purpose let it be observed,

1<sup>st</sup>, That these Words, *Whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all*, are not to be understood distributively of all and singular the Precepts

Precepts that the Law comprehends. For it SERM.  
X. is an exprefs Contradiction to say, that *He, who keeps the whole Law in that Sense, should at the same Time offend in any one Particular.* For he that keeps all and every single Precept, his Obedience is as perfect as it can be, it is impossible that he should be indicted for an Offender.

The Words therefore, tho' in Sound they be universal, do manifestly carry an Exception along with them like unto those in St. Matt. xii. 31. *All Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men, i. e. All Manner of Blasphemy shall be forgiven, the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost only excepted.* And so it must be interpreted here, *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, one only Point excepted, he is guilty of all.*

But then the Difficulty will still recur: For how can this be? Shall he that offends in one single Instance, be thereupon *ipso facto* convicted of all?

Is there so close and so necessary a Connection between one Sin and another, tho' of never so different or opposite a Nature,

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that he that is an Adulterer must for that very Reason immediately become a Murderer, and he that is a *Miser* at the same Time be deemed a *Prodigal*?

This, one would think, is so far from being clear, that it hardly looks consistent. And indeed the Meaning of the Text is not, that he who is guilty of one Sin, is therefore equally guilty of all the Sins that are, but only that he is guilty of the Breach of the *whole Law*, as it is collectively taken for a System or Body of Precepts, all and every of which are inviolably to be observed; and if in any one Branch it be infringed, that single Violation is sufficient to denominate a Man a Transgressor of the Law in general which thro' such his Default is no longer kept whole and entire, and being thus a Transgressor he is consequently liable to Punishment (as such) proportionably to the Guilt he has contracted. This I take to be the genuine Sense of the Words, in which the Apostle, it is probable, might oppose himself to an erroneous Conceit, then obtaining among the *Pharisees*, and since entertained by some of the *Rabbi's*, viz. that a Man may be justified before God upon his careful Observance of the *major*

Part



Part of the Law, notwithstanding, that in some few Instances, he should happen to transgress. Whereas it is written, and St. Paul also quotes it out of *Moses* (*Galat. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26.*) *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* And in the Reason of the Thing it is plain enough, that where nothing less than an universal Obedience is required, a wilful Neglect in any one Point, must be both sinful and damnable. And the Case is just the same under the Gospel (as appears by this Assertion of my Text) excepting that thro' the Merits of Christ, the Remission of Sins is obtained for us upon our unfeigned Repentance. But to proceed, and farther to clear and confirm the Sense of my Text, be it observed

2<sup>dly</sup>, That whosoever is so partial in his Obedience to the Law, as knowingly to leave any Part of his Duty undone, that Man may well be judged, and that by a very equitable Construction to be guilty of *all*. For tho' a Man that is prone to commit some Kind of Sins, may actually refrain from others, yet each single Act of Disobedience wilfully continued in, argues so great a Contempt of that

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Wisdom and Authority upon which the whole Law is established, that such a one in the Sight of an Omniscient Judge, can pass for no better than a *Rebel* and *Apostate*, as being in some Instances an actual Transgressor and in all Respects an habitual Contemner of the Law, which is equally authentick in all the Parts of it, (as well those that he makes so bold with, as those other, which he makes a Shew at least of obeying.) And, this is the very Reason which our Apostle himself assigns in the Verse immediately following the Text, *For he that said, do not commit Adultery, said also, do not kill. Now, if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law: i. e.* That Law which throughout all and every Part of it, is grounded upon the same Authority, and enforced by the same Sanctions, and consequently ought to be entirely obeyed without Distinction or Reserve, Partiality or Hypocrisy.

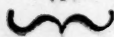
And when any Man has so far cast off that Regard which is due to the Lawgiver and his Law, as to dare to offend (*i. e.* in Truth to affront him) in any one Point, it is violently to be presumed, (*nay the God to*

whom all Hearts be open, he knows) that the same Person would with the same Greediness commit all Manner of Iniquity besides, if he were but equally inclined to it by Complexion, or sollicitated by Temptation, or invited by Opportunity. For it is evident enough that he is not under the Influence of any ingenuous Fear or reverential Love, or any Thing else that can thoroughly affect him with a Sense of his Duty, or lay an effectual Restraint upon his ungoverned Lusts and Passions. And for the farther Confirmation of this, it may be observed

3dly, That he who allows himself in the Commission of any known Sins, whilst he pretends to refrain from all the Rest, is in God's Account justly held guilty of *all*, because he offends against that divine Charity, that Love towards God and Man, which is alone the *fulfilling of the Law*, and the Bond of all Perfection. And who so is truly endued with it, his Life will be all of a Piece, and his Obedience always uniform. But for him that is destitute of it, his Practice will be irregular and inconsistent; this Precept shall be hypocritically obeyed, without any hearty Compliance; whilst that is as notoriously trans-

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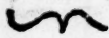
transgressed, without any Manner of Conscience, because the Man is guided all the while rather by Chance than by Choice, rather by Humour than any steady Principle of Duty. And such halting Obedience as this, what is it indeed but the grossest Prevarication? and how can it appear otherwise in the Sight of God? For as *Salvian* well says [in his Book de Gubernat. p. 79, 80. *Neque enim justa est causa cur præferenda sunt aliqua, ubi facienda sunt omnia. Si enim Servi pro Arbitrio suo Dominis obtemperant, ne in iis quidem in quibus obtemperaverint, obsequuntur. Quando enim Servus ex Domini iussis, ea facit tantummodo quæ vult facere, jam non dominicam voluntatem implet, sed suam.*]

“ There is not the least Colour of preferring  
 “ one Part of our Duty before another, where  
 “ the whole is still *but* our Duty. For if  
 “ Servants obey their Masters but just according to their own liking, even their  
 “ Obedience in that Case is far from being  
 “ dutiful. For when a Servant does no more  
 “ at his Master’s Command, than barely  
 “ what he has a Mind to do of himself, he  
 “ no longer fulfills his Master’s Pleasure but  
 “ his own. And it may well be concluded,  
 that



that he whose Obedience will carry him no farther than this comes to, is in Effect no better than a *Transgressor of the whole Law*, because (whatever his outward Conformity may be) he obeys no Part of it out of any due Sense of his own Obligation, any suitable Concern for God's Honour, or proper Submission to his Authority. And I hope what has been hitherto advanced, may in some good Measure suffice to settle the true Meaning of the Text, and render it easy and intelligible. And if you please to recollect it with me, the Sum of what has been said is briefly this, viz. That *whosoever keeps the whole Law, one Point only being excepted*, in which he wilfully offends, *he is guilty of all*, i. e. of the Breach of the *whole Law*, as it is an entire Body of Precepts, all of them confirmed by the same divine Authority, and therefore most entirely to be obeyed. And even one Instance of wilful Disobedience is in some Sense an *Infringement of the whole Law*, because it bespeaks a Contempt of the Authority upon which it is founded; and that once supposed, for the same Reason that one Precept is broken, so might all the rest, and so, it is like they would, upon the same Inducements.

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duancements. And besides, that Shew of Obedience which is sometimes paid to the Law in such Instances as best suit with Men's Interests or Humours, is in Reality no Obedience at all, as being utterly devoid of that generous Love and honourable Respect which makes what Men do, the free Act of their Will, and a proper Expression of Duty. Whereas when Men obey upon a lame Principle, they are scarce any better than Offenders, even whilst they are obeying. And in this Sense, as I conceive, we are to understand, and into these Reasons we are to resolve this Maxim of St. James, *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.*

And now, the Meaning of the Text being once fixed, it will be so much the easier to do what I proposed to do, *viz.*

*Secondly*, To obviate some Errors in Point of Doctrine, which it might be thought to countenance, and to detect some others which it effectually confutes. And first

Of the Errors that this Text might be thought to countenance; that absurd *Paradox* of the *Stoics*, that all Sins are equal; as if the stealing

stealing of a Pin were criminal in the same Degree, as stabbing one's own Father, which yet it would seem to be, if he that *offends in one Point*, must presently be pronounced *guilty of all*. But to fasten this Consequence upon us, is as absurd as the Absurdity itself. For the Text does not say, nor does it mean, that whosoever commits any one Sin, does thereby involve himself in the whole Guilt of every particular Sin prohibited in the Law. For at that Rate it would follow, not only that all Sins are equal in themselves, but that the Commission and Guilt of one single Sin, is equal to the Commission and Guilt of one thousand, or even of all the Sins that it is possible for a Man to *perpetrate*; which is too monstrous I think for any Man to believe. Whereas the Apostle's Intention (as has already been made out) is only to assert, that he who offends in one Point, is become a Violator of the whole Law, in as much as this single Offence is a Breach made in an intire Body of Precepts, which ought also to have been kept intire, out of Regard to the Authority, by which the whole was enacted. But this does not imply any manner of Equality between Sin and Sin, nor does it hinder  
but

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but that the Guilt of one Sin may be more heinous than that of another, or that the Burden of the Guilt and the Severity of the Punishment, may encrease proportionably to the Number and Aggravation of the Sins committed. And therefore this Assertion of the Apostle's has no Sort of Affinity with that of the *Stoics*. But

2dly, Another Error that has sometimes sought for Shelter under this Text, is that anti-scriptural Distinction of the *Papists*, between *Sins venial*, and *Sins mortal*. We are apt indeed to infer the quite contrary, as thinking that this general Assertion of the Apostle's amounts to a plain Proof, that there is no one Sin among *Christians*, (if it be a Sin at all) of so inconsiderable a Size, but what is in its own Nature damnable, and if unrepented of, will certainly prove so in the Issue. But *Estius* (a Man otherwise able enough for a Commentator) is so over subtle upon the Occasion, as to make even this Text speak in Favour of their own *Tenet*. For (says he) St. *James* in this place could intend no other, than the most heinous and grievous Offences; and therefore what he says can be no Prejudice to the Distinction betwixt *venial*, and

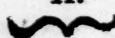


and *mortal Sins*. And this, it seems, is evident from the Instances produced in Confirmation of this Position, in the Text, which are no less than the Sins of Murder, and Adultery, which to be sure are mortal Sins, and those of the deepest *dye* too.

But then the *Schoolman* with all his Subtlety does not perceive that the Apostle's Aim in alledging these Instances, was not to specify all or any of those Sins, one of which, if singly committed, would make one *guilty of the whole Law*, but only to shew the special Reason why it is and must be so; and that is the Contempt of the Lawgiver's Authority, which is equally implied (tho' not in equal Degree) in one Sin as well as in another. For *he that said, thou shalt not commit Adultery, said also thou shalt not kill; and therefore if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law*. And this Reason will hold in the least Sin that can be imagined, as well as in the greatest of Crimes that can be committed. For he that said, *Thou shalt not kill*, has forbidden us even *to be angry without a Cause*; and therefore every the least Degree of causeless Anger is a Transgression of the Law,

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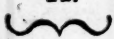
Law, as well as the most cruel Murder, tho' not attended with such aggravating Circumstances; and every the least Contempt levelled against an infinite Majesty, is liable to an eternal Vengeance, and sometimes the lesser the Transgression, the greater the Contempt, in Regard that Duty was so easy of Performance. In the Result therefore it appears, that there is no Room for this Distinction the *Papists* would obtrude upon us, because there can be no Sin so small in God's Account as upon that Consideration solely to deserve God's Pardon, which is what they mean by *venial*. But if they will needs make this Passage to patronize an Error, which in Truth it confutes, they must excuse us if we alledge it once more in Confutation of some other to which it is still more directly opposite For

3dly, The Perfection of human Righteousness, in which they place their vain Confidence, is hereby proved to be a presumptuous Mistake. For *if he that offends in one Point be in some Sense guilty of all*, as the *Apostle* here asserts, then much greater must the Burden of their Guilt be, who offend in many Things; and that we all do, as he himself informs us in the next Chapter. An

And sure such an Obedience as this that is attended with so many apparent Defects, and interrupted with so many notorious Transgressions, can never be thought to be perfect in its Kind, much less can it pass for meritorious. And moreover

4thly, Satisfaction for Sins past by Vertue of some such penitential good Works, as Prayer, Fasting, Alms, and the like, does hereby appear to be a vain Delusion. For if every single Offence be really loaded with so much Guilt as is here declared, and consequently obnoxious, then certainly our future Obedience can be no sufficient Equivalent to satisfy for our past Transgression. For one Debt is not cancelled by the Payment of another. And as the Debt of Punishment becomes due to God's Justice upon the Commission of any Sin, so the Debt of Obedience is at all Times due to his Sovereign Power, and therefore can never compensate for what we are justly to suffer.

Besides these pretended good Works are either Matters of Precept, or they are not so. If they are not Matters of Precept, they then degenerate into meer Will-worship and Superstition, and can afford the Observers of them

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And these are the Errors in Doctrine which I had Occasion to take Notice of, as being either wrongfully fathered upon this Text, or else solidly confuted from it.

It remains only in the third Place,

*Thirdly*, That I make a practical Inference or two from the whole, and so conclude.

*1st*, Then from what has been said, we may be thoroughly convinced of the odious Nature, and pernicious Consequence of all manner of Sin, even the least that can be imagined. For there is no known or deliberate Sin that is, be it greater or lesser, but what immediately reflects upon God's Honour, and boldly intrenches upon his Authority. And where his Honour and Authority are so nearly concerned, the Matter cannot be little, whatever we may think of it. And *if the Wages of Sin be Death*, (of every Sin unrepented



repented of) and that Death be eternal, sure eternal Death is something more than a Trifle, though we may be so desperate as to dally with it. Let us not therefore commit that fatal Error in Practice, to indulge our selves in the habitual Commission of any known Sin, upon the Presumption that it is but a little one. It is true there is a manifest Disparity in Sins; for some are much more crying and provoking, much more daring and insolent than others; but there can be no such Thing as a little Sin, since the Guilt of all Sin is represented as so heinous, and the Punishment of it so terrible in Holy Writ. Nay, it is impossible to suppose a little Sin, without being guilty of a great one in the very Supposition, and blasphemously conceiving the Majesty of God to be but little that is offended at it, and his Power to be but little that will execute Vengeance upon it. But since his Majesty is infinite and his Power immense, the Guilt of every Sin becomes in that Regard inconceivably great, and the Punishment of it, if not remitted, will be proportionably grievous. Our only Comfort under the Gospel, is, that there is no Sin so unmeasurably great as to be un-

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capable of Pardon, except it be that which includes an obstinate and final Impenitence. But then it should be a Caution with us on the other Hand, not to think any so inconsiderably small as that we may safely allow it in ourselves, or that God will totally overlook it. For in so thinking we shall both deceive and destroy our own Souls, and the most extenuated Sin that is under this Misconception will cause us to neglect our Repentance, and so betray us into everlasting Perdition.

2dly, From what has been said, we may also learn how to make a Judgment of the Sincerity of our own Hearts towards God. For if the Doctrine of the Text be true, it is plain there can be no Obedience acceptable with God, or available to Salvation, but what is entire. And it is as plain, that that Obedience which is not entire, can never be sincere. For if Men perform any one Part of their Religious Obedience out of a dutiful Regard towards God, and a zealous Intention to serve and honour him, the same Principle will carry them evenly and uniformly throughout all the other Parts, and not suffer them to transgress wilfully

fully in any. This to be sure is what God's true and faithful Servants will hold themselves obliged to do, that *they may be sincere, and without Offence, till the Day of Christ, (Phil. i. 10.)* and *this* is what they will constantly endeavour to do, *through Christ that strengtheneth them.* And if at any Time thro' Ignorance or Inconsideration, Weakness or Surprize they be overtaken in a Fault; as soon as they are made sensible of it, they will strive to recover themselves, and take Care to be more watchful for the future. Nay, and if thro' the Fraud and Malice of the Devil or their own carnal Will and Frailness, they should fall into any great Sin, yet they will not indulge it till it become habitual; or if they should insensibly contract any evil Habit, as soon as their Conscience pricks them for it, they will instantly break it off by a deep and bitter Repentance; and with the *penitent Prodigal return, and say, Father, we have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, but yet, even yet enable us, and so accept us.* Such is the Character of those that are sincere good *Christians*, and such the constant Tenour of their Lives. But now when Men will distinguish in Matters of Duty,

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observe this and neglect that, just as their Inclination leads, or interest sways them, it is notorious that such Men are rather Self-pleasers, than the Servants of God, not doing his Will from the Heart, but obeying their own Lusts ; or else they are but Men-pleasers, who study rather to maintain a fair Reputation abroad, than a good Conscience at Home. For the Irregularity of their Practice, is a sure Sign that they are not acted by any conscientious Principle of Love towards God, or Zeal for his Honour, because the Operation and Influence of such a Principle, would be in all Cases the same, and teach them to *deny all Manner of Ungodliness*, and to abstain from Evil under every Appearance, from private Sins as well as publick ; from those that are transacted only between God and their own Consciences, as well as those that fall under the Notice of others, and the Lash of human Laws : In a Word, from those that Custom has made fashionable, and Opinion sets but light by, as well as those that are scandalous and abominable even in the Eye of the World.

To conclude therefore, let us endeavour to possess our Minds with an awful Sense of God's



God's immense Majesty, his Sovereign Authority, and infinite Holiness; and let us consider how his Majesty is affronted, his Authority contravened, and his Holiness grieved, at the wilful Commission of every the least Sin that is. This let us consider, and considering let us be afraid, afraid of daring and dallying with the just Vengeance of the one *Supreme Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy*; and since all Sin is a direct Violation of God's Holy Law, and therefore of itself a high Provocation, let us stand in Awe, and not sin, not sin at all, if human Frailty could attain to that Perfection; but to be sure not continue and indulge ourselves in the habitual Practice of any known Sin: For that would be to add Rebellion to our Sin, and heighten every Offence into an Insolence.

And as this reverential Awe should beget in us an Abhorrence of all that is evil, and make us careful to *eschew it*, so should the more ingenuous Principle of Love, excite us to *cleave to that which is good*, and pursue it, it should engage us to dedicate ourselves, our Souls and Bodies entirely unto God, to employ all our Powers, and exert our utmost

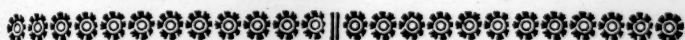
SERM. Endeavours in his Service, that so in the Integrity of our Hearts, our Obedience (however otherwise imperfect) may be accepted, our Infirmities pitied, our Sins covered, and our Souls everlastingly saved through the Merits, and Intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom with the Father, &c,



# S E R M O N XI.

The Sins of Men not chargeable upon  
God, but upon themselves.



JAMES i. 13, 14.

*Let no Man say when he is tempted,  
I am tempted of God: for God  
cannot be tempted with Evil, nei-  
ther tempteth he any Man.*

*But every Man is tempted when he  
is drawn away of his own Lust,  
and enticed.*

THESE Words do contain a compound  
Proposition; the first Part of which  
is negative, and denies that God is, or can  
be

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SERM. be the proper efficient Cause of Temptation,  
 XI. and the latter *affirmative*, directly asserting  
 that the *Lust* of a Man's own Heart *is*.

For the better Understanding of which I  
 shall

*First*, Explain the Terms, in which it is  
 exprest.

*Secondly*, I shall state and prove the Doctrine  
 herein contained. And

*Thirdly*, I shall endeavour to clear it from  
 those Exceptions to which it may seem to be  
 liable.

*First*, I shall explain the Terms in which  
 it is exprest. For unless we be first ascer-  
 tained what is here meant by *Temptation*,  
 and what by that *Lust* to which it is imputed,  
 we shall not be able to form any rational  
 Judgment of the Truth or Reason of the  
 main Proposition, why no Man must be said  
*to be tempted of God, but every Man by the*  
*Seduction, and Enticement of his own Lust.*

Now the Word *Temptation* is variously used.  
 In its original Signification it means no more  
 than a bare Probation or Trial: and when  
 applied to Man it must mean the Proof and  
 Trial



*upon God, but upon themselves.* 267

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XI.

Trial of his inward Sense, and the Temper and Disposition of his Soul, by any such Method as is proper to make the Discovery. Thus, for Instance, the Experiment of a Man's Courage is taken from his resolute and undaunted Behaviour in Cases of Difficulty and Danger; and he that has acquitted himself bravely upon such Occasions, is (in common Speech) called a *tryed* Man.

And thus Afflictions and Crosses are frequently in Scripture, and particularly in the 2d and 12th Verses of this very Chapter, filed *Temptations*, because they do effectually try Men's Hearts, with Respect to their Constancy and Sincerity towards God.

And on the other Hand Plenty and Prosperity may be said to be a Temptation, as being that State of Life which best proves our Humility, Moderation, Sobriety and Thankfulness.

And a Temptation may be presented with a good Purpose, and directed to a good End, such as is the Exercise, the Manifestation, the Improvement, the Encouragement of some eminent Virtue, as in the Case of *Abraham* and *Job*; or else the Detection, the Conviction and exemplary Punishment of some incorrigible

incorrigible Sinner, as in the Case of *Pharaoh*.

And on the contrary, it may be presented with a wicked Design, and accompanied with an unhappy Tendency, and a malicious Endeavour to debauch Men's Virtue, to seduce them from their Duty and betray them into Sin.

And *Temptation* taken in this stricter Sense (which is also the Sense of the Text) is no other than an industrious Solicitation to Sin, managed and carried on by the Devil, as the *World* administers Occasion, and the *Flesh* is found ready to close with it.

The World is stored with a vast Variety of Objects, which are continually striking upon our Senses and Imaginations, and do vehemently affect our Appetites and Passions, by the Means of which it too often puts a wrong Bias both upon the Understanding and the Will. And beside it abounds with evil Counsellors and evil Examples, which frequently lead us out of the Way.

And the *Flesh* is naturally prone to Evil, and too apt to be rebellious both against Reason and Grace, and take Part with our grand Adversary the Devil, who lays hold of all Advantages,

*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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Advantages, which either our outward Circumstances, or the inward Disposition of our Minds can give him, and is perpetually exciting and spurring on our natural Proclivity to Sin, by flattering Hopes, and false Fears, and a thousand sly Suggestions, and subtle Insinuations. And this I say is that Sort of Temptation which is here spoken of in the Text.

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It remains now to be considered, what that Lust is, to which this Temptation is justly imputed.

And that I conceive to be that inordinate Concupiscence which adheres to our corrupt Nature, and shews itself in the Irregularity of our Appetites and Passions, and (through their ill Influence) in the Blindness of our Understanding, the Perverseness of our Wills, and the general Disorder of all our Faculties.

This is the very same that St. Paul, *Galat.* v. calls *the Lust of the Flesh*, by which he understands not only such irregular Motions as are excited by the Pleasures of Sense, but all Manner of inordinate Desires; for when he gives us a Catalogue immediately after of those Works of the Flesh, which are the

Effect

SERM.

XI.

Effect of this lusting, he reckons among the rest, *Emulations, Seditions, and Heresies*, which are not Sins properly carnal, *i. e.* not such as are peculiarly gratifying to any sensitive Appetite, as being seated in the Mind. By this Lust or Concupiscence therefore we are to understand that Inordinancy of Desire which arises from the general Depravity of our whole Nature. And now having prepared my Way by fixing the true Meaning of the Expressions here made Use of by St. James, I proceed

*Secondly*; To state and prove the Doctrine delivered in the Text, *viz.* That God is not the proper efficient Cause of *Temptation*, but *Lust is*. *That no Man is tempted of God, but every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed.*

And in the first Place it is demonstrable, that God cannot be the Author of *Temptation*, let it proceed from whence it will. For *Temptation* in the Notion it is here taken, is a direct Solicitation to Sin, not by Accident only, inclining Men to an undue Compliance therewith, but maliciously contrived, fitted, and designed for that very Purpose.

And



*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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And that God should have any such De- SERM.  
XI.  
signs against his poor impotent Creatures, is  
utterly inconsistent with his Holiness, his  
Justice, his Goodness, and his Wisdom.

1<sup>st</sup>, It is inconsistent with his Holiness,  
which is pure and perfect, and infinitely re-  
moved from all Manner of Defilement. He  
cannot commit Iniquity himself, because he  
is perfectly and essentially holy; he cannot ap-  
prove it for the same Reason, because the  
every Approbation of it would argue at least  
some Defect of Holiness. And consequently  
he cannot *tempt* Men to the Commission of  
it, because *Temptation* must of Necessity im-  
ply Approbation. Nay whosoever does by  
powerful Solicitation determine another to  
sin, he (the Tempter meaning) is in Effect  
the Author of that Sin. But, *God cannot be  
tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any  
Man* (says our Apostle) because the Perfection  
and Immutability of his Holiness makes him  
incapable both of the one and the other.

2<sup>dly</sup>, It is equally inconsistent with his  
Justice, *to tempt any Man to sin*. For *the  
Hearts of all Men are in his Hand, and he  
turneth them whithersoever he will*. And if  
he should by violent Temptation turn them  
towards

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towards Sin, the Determination would be irresistible and their Sin unavoidable; and how could God be the just Avenger of that Sin, to which he had been so violent a Tempter? How could he punish Sinners, for what it was not in their Power to avoid?

3dly, It is no less inconsistent with the Divine Goodness to tempt Men to sin. For the Notion of God's Goodness implies a perpetual Propension in him to procure the Good and Happiness of his Creatures. And therefore it is not to be imagined that he should set Snares and Traps in their Way, on Purpose to make them miserable: it is impossible to think that he should cruelly delight himself, first in leading them into inevitable Temptation, and then in bringing them to endless Punishment.

4thly, It is alike inconsistent with his Wisdom to tempt Men to sin. For *every Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation.* And the Kingdom of God consists in Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. And, if he, contrary to the express Tenour of his Laws, and the whole Design of his Gospel, should by secret Methods endeavour to propagate Sin, Confusion

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XI.

and Misery in the World, how could he pass for a wise Governor? or how indeed could *his Kingdom stand*? And for this reason it is incompatible for the *King of Saints* (*whose Ways are just and true*, without the least Deviation) to become the Tempter of Mankind. No! *Let not any Man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* For that is a pure Absurdity, an utter Impossibility: but let him look into his own Heart, and there he will find the true Cause and Principle of all the Mischief and Misery that he suffers from this Quarter. *For then* (says my Text) *is every Man tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed.*

And it is upon very good Grounds that *Lust*, or the Inordinacy of our Desires thro' original Corruption, is here charged as the sole or principal Cause of all *Temptation*; 1<sup>st</sup>, Because it makes *Temptation* what it is, and arms it with all that Delusion, and Enticements, by which we are so apt to be seduced. And 2<sup>dly</sup>, because it actually induces us to Compliance, and procures the deliberate Consent of the Will thereunto. And that which helps *Temptation* to be so powerful in its Assaults, and so fatally successful in the

SERM. Issue, deserves to bear the whole Blame of it.  
 XI. And

1<sup>st</sup>, I say our Lust is that which makes *Temptation* what it is, and arms it with all that Delusion and Enticement, by which we are so apt to be seduced. It is true, if we had all our Faculties as entire as our first Parents had in their Innocence, *Satan* might assault us and beguile us too, as he did them. But yet he could not set upon us with the same Advantage, that he does in the degenerate State we now are. For now our whole Frame and *Mechanism* is out of Order, our Appetites are gross and ungoverned, our Passions are either misplaced upon improper Objects, or else wound up to an unreasonable Excess; our Intellect is so distorted that the Dictates of Passion do too commonly pass for Reason, and our Will so depraved that the *Titillations* of Sense are embraced as worthy of its Choice, and fraught with real Good. And amidst all this Disorder, almost every Thing appears to us under false Colours, and *Temptation* (the greatest Cheat of all others) passes upon us under all manner of Disguises; and even those Things which are indifferent in their own Nature,



or perhaps useful and beneficial, turn to our Prejudice, and prove ensnaring. And all this is owing to our own deceitful Lusts. Thus, for Example, *Wealth tempts* Men oftentimes to be insolent and forgetful of God, and *Poverty* to be impatient and distrustful of him. Not but that there is Room enough, and to be sure abundant Reason for the Exercise of the contrary Virtues in both these Conditions. But the immoderate Love of this World, and the undue Value which Men set upon its Enjoyments, is the Occasion that they so often miscarry in such Cases. Thus again, Knowledge is certainly an excellent Thing, and the Desire of it a laudable Quality; but an over-weening Conceit of ourselves, and the Affectation of more than belongs to us, is a very dangerous Snare, that frequently betrays Men into the greatest Absurdities and most pernicious Errors. Once more, the Gifts and Endowments of Men famous in their Generations, and the Reward and Encouragement which they deservedly meet with, do afford Matter of Satisfaction to any good Man; but if Self-Love looks upon them with an evil Eye, they are soon made the Occasion of Strife and Envy. And there is

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XI.

no Temptation incident to Man, (let it be in what Instance it will) but what takes its Rise from some corrupt Lust, and forms itself suitably thereunto. And were it not for this inbred Corruption, the Objects of our Desires would make no ill Impression upon us, and the *Creatures of God (which are all good,* even those that we most abused to our own Hurt) would be both salutary and pleasant to us, if *received with Thanksgiving,* and used with Moderation. Lust therefore is justly chargeable with the ill Consequences of that *Temptation* which it arms to our undoing. But

2dly, It is Lust also that induces us to comply with *Temptation*, and procures the deliberate Consent of the Will thereunto. For the Congruity that is between our vitiated Appetites, and the Baits of Temptation, soon creates a Liking, and that Liking enkindles Desire, and the Importunity of that Desire soon wearies out our Reason, and then entirely gains upon the Will: And Lust thus conceiving, does at last bring forth Sin, and our own foolish Consent is the *Midwife* to the accursed Birth.

This

*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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XI.

This Process we may observe in that Temptation with which *David* was so shamefully foiled in the Matter of *Uriah the Hittite*. He saw his Wife *Bathsheba* with Pleasure, for the Woman was beautiful to look upon, and having seen he lusted after her, and having taken this *Fire* into his Bosom, cool Reason could find no Place, and Chastity could inhabit there no longer; but with eager Haste, and a Heart fully bent to commit Wickedness, he immediately enquired after her, sent for her and defiled her. And by this Time his Reason was so perfectly blinded, and his Will so much enslaved by his Passion, that to cover his Shame he increased his Guilt by deliberately contriving to have her Husband murdered.

And it is not to be conceived that a Man so upright as *David* was, *except* in this very Matter, should have so greedily committed the two flagrant Sins of Adultery and Murder, but that his Reason and his Will were both over-powered by his Passion, and his unlawful Love was his only Counsellor.

Since therefore Lust is so very powerful in procuring our Compliance with Temptation, and our Consent to Sin, all our prevailing

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XI.

Wailing Temptations, and reigning Sins are justly imputable thereunto. Wicked Spirits, it is true, and wicked Men, may be very instrumental and industrious in plying us with the Incentives, and Incitements to Sin, and putting the Opportunity into our Hands. But Temptation can only solicit, but not force our Consent: and all the Stratagems and Devices of Hell could never prevail against us, were it not for the Corruption and Treachery of our own Hearts, which alone are able to persuade us to hug and embrace our certain Ruin. And now having stated, and proved the Doctrine of the Text, it may be proper

*Thirdly*, To clear it from some Exceptions to which it may seem to be liable.

For after all that has been said, it may be alledged that *Temptation* is attributed to God in several Places of Holy Writ.

But since it is so demonstrably plain, that a direct Solicitation to Sin (which is what we at present understand by Temptation) is utterly irreconcilable with God's essential Attributes, it must be presumed either that the Temptation any where ascribed to God,



*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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is of a quite different Kind from that we are now speaking of, or else that the Permission, or perhaps the Probation and the Punishment may be from God, whilst the Seduction of the Temptation is owing to some other latent Cause.

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XI.

And so it will soon appear, if we take some of those Examples that any where occur in Scripture into Consideration. Thus we read *Gen. xxii. 1. That God tempted Abraham* in commanding him *to offer up his Son Isaac*. But what was the End of this Temptation? Not to seduce him into Sin, but to make Proof of his Faith and Obedience, by a Command that seemed to require him not only to do an unnatural Action, but withal, necessarily to obstruct the Completion of the Promise that had been before made to him. And this was an End worthy of God to do Honour to that *Holy Patriarch* by so difficult a Trial, and to leave so noble a Specimen upon Record of the Energy of that Faith, that was able to overcome the mighty Difficulty: And so likewise God is said to lead the *Israelites forty Years in the Wilderness, to humble and to prove them, and to know* (that is to make it known by this Experiment)

T 4

*what*

SERM.

XI.

*what was in their Heart, whether they would keep his Commandments or no, (Deut. viii. 2.)*

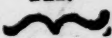
And surely it well becomes the Holiness, Wisdom and Goodness of God, to approve the Sincerity and Stedfastness of his People, and to restrain them from Sin by such Methods as he sees fit, but not to entice them to it by any. But it may be urged further, that God is said (2 Sam. xxiv. 1.) *to move David to number the People*, which yet was a wicked Action; for we find (ver. 10.) that *David's Heart smote him for it* afterward, and he confessed, that *he had sinned greatly in what he had done*. But this admits of a very easy Solution; for (in 1 Chron. xxi. 1.) It is said *that Satan stood up and provoked him to it*, and it appears by the Circumstances of the Story, that the Vanity of his own Heart, and a Confidence in the Arm of Flesh was that which secretly prompted him to do so very foolishly.

And tho' God is said indeed to *move him*, yet it is only because the Multitude of *David's* Subjects, and the Prosperity which (under God) he had enjoyed did occasionally (thro' his own Default) minister Fuel to his Pride and Vain-Glory. So that it was the

Abuse

*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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Abuse of God's good Providence by *David* SERM.  
XI.  
himself, and not the natural Tendency of it,   
that caused him to *commit this Folly*.

But the famous Instance of *Pharaoh's* Induration, seems to be more difficult. For God is expressly said to *harden his Heart*, as he had told *Moses* he would do upon his first Message. And it seems to have been the direct Intendment of his Providence, for we read *Exod. ix. 16. For in very Deed, for this Cause have I raised thee up, that in thee I may shew my Power, and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth.*

But in Answer to this, it is to be observed first, that *Pharaoh* is also said to *harden himself*; and therefore the moral Evil, the Sin of Obstinacy was purely his own: nor is it to be supposed that God should actually infuse that very Hardness of Heart, for which he punished him in so exemplary a Manner. So far from that, that the very Method in which he was treated, one would have thought might have produced the quite contrary Effect. For the Wonders that were multiplied in the Land of *Egypt*, and the amazing Judgments with which he was visited successively, were enough sure to soften and subdue any Heart but his. And

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And that they had not so kindly an Operation upon him, was owing to his Pride, Covetousness and Cruelty. He was in his own Eyes a *mighty Monarch*, above the Check or Controul of any rival Power: and he looked upon himself as the absolute Lord and Proprietor of the *Israelites* his *humble Slaves*, who had now been in his Possession for above two hundred Years; and loth he was to part with a People, that had been so very serviceable. And therefore tho' he was *fore vexed and plagued*, and sometimes almost quite confounded, yet when he saw there was any Respite, he *hardened his Heart again*, as hoping that these Plagues would one Day see an End, and that he should be able to detain his *Slaves* still in their Captivity.

So that it is plain, that *Pharaoh* took Occasion, where none was given, to become still more obdurate, even in Defiance of those astonishing Works and Wonders, which had they been duly considered, were abundantly sufficient to mollify and humble him.

And, now, taking him at this Period, I see no Reason to deny but that *God might harden him*, even by his own positive Act.

For



*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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For it may very well be supposed, that by SER.M.  
XI. this Time he had *filled up the Measure of his Iniquity*, and become a *Vessel seal'd up to Destruction*. And when Men have sinned on to this desperate Pitch, it is just in God to strike them with judicial Blindness, and when the Hardness of their impenitent Hearts has been so long incorrigible, to make their Repentance at last impossible. And thus God had decreed to deal with *Pharaoh*, that is, after he had so long, and so wilfully persisted in his Wickedness, as he foresaw he would, to conclude him at length under a State of final Impenitence, and to treat him from thence forward, as the *Vessel of his Wrath*.

And it was likewise just in God to inflict some remarkable Vengeance upon such an *Heir of the Kingdom of Darknes*, who would not formerly, and now could not repent of his Deeds to give God the Glory: And therefore it is, that God says, *in very Deed, for this Cause have I raised thee up* (or made thee to stand, or preserved thee as the *Septuagint* render it) *that in thee I might shew my Power*. And again (*Exod. xiv. 17.*) *I, behold I will harden the Egyptians and they shall follow them:*  
and

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XI.

*and I will get me Honour upon Pharaoh and all his Host, upon his Chariots, and upon his Horsemen.* Which last fatal *Induration* or *Infatuation* of *Pharaoh* was designed on Purpose, to work his Overthrow, and to make him a lasting Monument of God's just Judgment upon obstinate, presumptuous, and irreclaimable Sinners.

It appears therefore upon Examination, that these Instances are no Exceptions to the established Doctrine of the Text: For still *God tempteth not any Man*, i. e. He does not solicit any to Sin, much less betray him into it, by any direct Efficiency or Determination. He may indeed in a qualified Sense be said to *lead Men into Temptation*, as that Petition in the Lord's Prayer expresseth it, i. e. by his bare Sufferance, perhaps in not interposing to hinder the Effect of Men's own wilful Folly, or by bringing them to the Trial, and placing them in his wise Providence, in such Circumstances of Life, as may best prove the Sincerity or discover the secret Corruption of their Hearts.

Or lastly, by withdrawing his Grace after it has been slighted and abused, and giving them up to the Lusts of their own Hearts, and

*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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XL

and by finally deserting them who first deserted him, and thereby provoked him to leave them helpless and remediless, in that State of Hardness and Impenitency, into which they had desperately plunged themselves. *Let no Man say then, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of Evil, neither tempteth he any Man. But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Heart, and enticed.*

And now give me leave only to make some practical Use of what has been said, and I shall soon dismiss you. And

1<sup>st</sup>, Let us take the Caution of the Text, and have a Care of charging God foolishly, and blasphemously, as if it were possible for him to be the Author of Sin, or which amounts to the same a Tempter to it.

Let us not reflect Dishonour upon God by cherishing any Opinion so unworthy of him.

Let us not suppose (as some partial Thinkers who confine God's Mercies to themselves, are apt to do) that God has not afforded a sufficient Measure of Grace to all Men, to enable them to resist Temptation. To all I mean that are disposed humbly to ask it, and  
thank-

SERM.

XI.

thankfully to use it. For upon this Supposition some Men would be concluded under an absolute Impossibility of avoiding Sin, and that for no other Reason, but only because, without any Default of their own, they were left destitute of that Help, which alone was sufficient to keep them from it. Which were in Effect to suppose, that God not only tempteth, but even necessitateth, some Men to sin. A Supposition too harsh for *Christian* Ears to bear.

Again; let us not presume to say (as some *Libertines* will, to palliate their Wickedness) that our Vices are the pure Effect of Nature, Complexion and Constitution; that such and such Appetites and Propensions derived to us *ex traduce*, will unavoidably carry us towards such and such Objects; and that Men's Lusts burn as necessarily as Fire. For this would be directly to reproach our Maker, and to say not only that he is our Tempter to sin, but that he hath made us Sinners, and that by the very Frame of our Nature (it is determined) we must be so. Whereas in Truth, it is the Province of Reason assisted by divine Grace, to controul these irregular Appetites and Passions, in the good Govern-

ment



*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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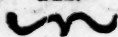
ment of which all the Excellency of Virtue does consist, and it is the proper Commendation of a free Agent to be virtuous upon rational Choice, against the Bent of strong Inclination; nay it is the Triumph indeed of Grace itself, to manifest its *own Sufficiency*, by *showing its Strength thus made perfect in Weakness*.

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Let us not then wrongfully charge our Vices upon Nature, and thereby strike at the God of Nature, whose Workmanship, and Offspring we are. Nay let us not bring a false Accusation against the *Devil himself*, as if he alone were answerable for all our Faults. For alas, no Man is made a Sinner without his own Consent. The *Devil* indeed is a *Tempter from the Beginning*: It is his whole Employment, his only Pleasure (as I may so say) so to be. But tho' he may insinuate subtilly, and entice winningly, yet he cannot determine us necessarily, he cannot compel us to sin. It cannot be supposed that God should commit so large and uncontrollable a Power to the Seducer of Mankind: and we cannot allow ourselves so to think without throwing the Blame directly upon God himself. Whereas indeed if we

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we cast our Eyes inwards, there we shall find the Source of all our Corruptions : it is the Treachery of our own Hearts, that even invites Temptation : it is the Depravity of our Wills, that basely complies with it. Let us not mistake ourselves, *this, this* is the Cause *why Sin reigneth, and tyrannizeth* so much *in our mortal Bodies*. And having found out the true Cause, it is the easier to direct you to the proper Cure.

And therefore 2dly, Let us follow the *wise Man's* Advice (*Prov. iv. 23.*) and *keep our Hearts with all Diligence, since thence are the Issues of Life*. For the Heart is the Fountain of the moral and spiritual Life, as well as the natural ; and if the Fountain be infected, the Streams must necessarily partake of it ; the Infection will soon overspread the whole Man, and shew itself in all his Conversation. For he *that knew best what is in Man* has assured us, (*Mat. xv. 19. Mark viii. 22.*) that from within, *out of the Heart of Men proceed evil Thoughts, Adulteries, Fornications, Murders, Theft, Covetousness, Wickedness, Deceit, Lasciviousness, an evil Eye, Pride, Foolishness. That all these Things come from within and defile the Man.* To avoid

*upon God, but upon themselves.*

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XII.

which Defilement, we must be sure to keep a strict Guard upon the first Startings and Wandrings of Desire, upon the very first Approaches and Tendencies to Sin. For since the Spring of Action is in the Mind, according as that stands bent, such will the Course and Tenour of a Man's Life be. And it is so much the more necessary to be very watchful over our own Hearts, because it is there that Lust harbours, which is apt at all Turns to enter into Conspiracy with the Enemy, and open the Gates wider to the Tempter, whenever he proffers a suitable Gratification. Every the least Motion therefore must be narrowly watched, every Avenue constantly secured, we must always watch, and always pray that God would deliver us even from our own deceitful Hearts, lest by their Treachery *we should enter into Temptation*, and become Captives to Sin and Satan.

Now to God the Father, &c.

U

SERMON

upon God, but upon himself  
which Beliefment, we shall be sure to keep  
this Guard upon the first starting and  
washings of Death upon the very first  
and Tendency to Sin. For this  
Spring of Action is in the Mind  
and that stands forth, such as the  
and Tendency of a Man's Mind  
to which the more necessary to be  
which over our own Heart, for it is  
that that last hindrance, which is not  
to enter into Conscience with the first  
and open the Gate wider to the  
wherever he profits a little, and  
Every the least Motion  
will be narrowly watched, and  
continually secured, we shall always watch  
always pray that God would deliver us  
from our own hearts, and Heart, by  
that Teaching, we shall always be  
and become Captives to Sin and Satan.  
Now to God the Father, etc.

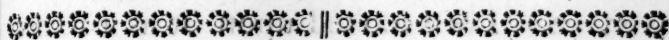
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## S E R M O N XII.

Whosoever committeth Sin, is the  
Servant of Sin.



JOHN viii. 34.

*Jefus answered them, Verily verily I  
say unto you, Whosoever commit-  
teth Sin, is the Servant of Sin.*

**T**H E S E Words are part of a very SERM.  
serious and fuitable Reply of our XII.  
Saviour Christ's, to a very imperti-  
nent Allegation of some certain *Jews*, who,  
by the Circumstances, should seem to have  
believed on him, and yet nevertheless were  
too prone to mistake him. For whilst Christ  
was propounding to them the blessed Advan-  
tages of a true Faith and stedfast Perseve-  
U 2 rance,

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XII.

rance, as being a means *to bring them to a more perfect Knowledge of God, and a right Understanding of themselves, and withal to deliver them from the Thraldom of inveterate Prejudice, and habitual Vice; I say, whilst he was propounding these Things to them, with all the Tenderneſs imaginable, ſaying, If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Disciples indeed, and ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you free.* (ver. 32.) They looked upon it as a Reflection injurious to their ancient Privilege and Birthright, and answered him pertly enough (ver. 33.) *We be Abraham's Seed, and were never in Bondage to any Man: how ſayeſt thou, Ye ſhall be made free?*

They valued themselves at no ſmall Rate as being the Descendents of *Abraham*, and exempted from the Condition of Slaves even by expreſs Law. For ſo it is provided (*Levit. xxv. 39, &c.*) *If thy Brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be ſold unto thee; thou ſhalt not compel him to ſerve as a Bond-ſervant: But as an hired Servant, and as a Sojourner, he ſhall be with thee, and ſhall ſerve thee unto the Year of Jubile. And then ſhall he depart from thee, both he*

and his Children with him, and shall return unto his own Family, and unto the Possession of his Fathers shall he return. For they are my Servants, which I brought forth out of the Land of Egypt: They shall not be sold as Bondmen. As thinking themselves therefore secure in this their native Liberty, and that by God's own Provision, they thought Scorn of our Saviour's Proposal, and began to expostulate the Indignity: How sayest thou that we, we that be Abraham's Seed, and were never in Bondage to any Man, that we shall be made free?

But our blessed Lord soon convinced them, that they were in a gross Mistake, about the Nature of that Freedom and Servitude, of which he was then discoursing. For he answered them with much Earnestness. *Verily verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth Sin, (i. e. habitually) is the Servant of Sin*; let his condition otherwise be what it will. And this Reply being sufficient at once to make them sensible of their Error, and ashamed of their vain Conceit, he leaves the Application of it to Conscience and Ingenuity.

And what was at first directed to them, does equally concern *us*: for the Text affords us an indefinite Proposition, implying that every one, let him be who he will, that committeth Sin, i. e. (as *Grotius* and others understand it) who is habitually inclined to it, and makes a customary Practice of it, is no better than a Servant or a Slave: or that the State of such a Sinner is a State of Servitude.

This is what the Blessed Jesus expressly asserts, and it is what I shall endeavour to illustrate and explain in the ensuing Discourse.

And in Order to this, I shall

*First*, Premise something concerning the Condition, and Manner or Usage of such as be Servants or Slaves in general.

*Secondly*, I shall shew by particular Instances wherein the Servitude of the habitual Sinner does consist.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, I shall premise something concerning the Condition, and Manner or Usage of such as be Servants or Slaves in general.

Now the Condition of a Servant is opposite to that of a Freeman: And a Freeman



is he, who hath a Right or Power to dispose of himself, his Goods, his Time, his Labour, or any Thing that is his own as he shall judge most fit. On the contrary, he is a Servant whose Person and Goods, or at least whose Time and Labour are either in whole or in part at the Disposal of another.

And according to the different Extent of that Power which one Man may have over another in all or any of these Respects, there are different Degrees of Servitude, and different Sorts of Servants.

Some there are whom we may call free or conditional Servants, who let themselves out for Hire, and do, in Lieu of that Meat, Drink and Wages which they receive, covenant to perform faithful, and diligent Service to their Masters; which, if they neglect, they are also subject to bodily Coercion or Punishment. But further than this their Masters have no Authority over their Bodies, or the Fruit of their Bodies, or their Goods, which are the Fruits and just Hire of their Labour.

But when the Time is once expired, for which they had contracted to serve, they are then at Liberty to dispose of themselves as

they pleaſe. And of theſe kind of Servants, ſome are hired at large to do any lawful Service that is required of them; ſome are by Contract, to ſerve only in ſome particular and more ingenious Employment; and ſome again to do the meanest Offices and vilest Kind of Drudgery.

On the contrary, there are others whom we may call *absolute Servants or Slaves*, either made ſuch by the Chance of War, or by the voluntary Sale of themſelves for Price. And ſuch have been ſuppoſed to be abſolutely and entirely in the Power of their Lords and Owners, without any Sort of Right reſerved to themſelves over their Perſons, their Children, their Goods, their Time, their Pains, or any Thing, wherein they may be uſeful to ſuch their Proprietors.

And whether they be fed or ſtarved, whether they be bought or ſold, whatever they are conſtrained either to do or ſuffer, there is no Redreſs for them, no Hopes of a Releaſe, no Proſpect (unleſs ſomething extraordinary ſhould happen) of ſeeing any End of their Miſery.

But both the hired Servant, and the meeſt Slave, do differ from a Freeman, and agree among

among themselves in this, that they cannot dispose of themselves, or bestow their Time and Labour just as they please, but are subject to the Will of another, either partially, and for a Time, or else totally and perpetually. And having premised thus much concerning the Condition and Usage of Servants and Slaves, I proceed

*Secondly*, To shew by particular Instances, wherein the Servitude of the habitual Sinner doth consist. Our Saviour positively pronounces him *to be the Servant of Sin*. And St. Paul assigns the formal Reason of it, namely his servile Obedience thereunto. *Know ye not* (says he Rom. vi. 16.) *that to whom ye yield yourselves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether it be of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness.*

And St. Peter shews upon what Title he becomes such, namely the Conquest which his corrupt Lusts gain over a depraved Will. For (as he speaks 2 Ep. ii. 19.) *of whom a Man is overcome, of the same he is brought in Bondage*, And this is also confirmed by St. Paul (Rom. vii. 23.) where he owns, in the Person of the unregenerate, *I see another Law*

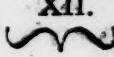
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*Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members. And he had before confessed for him (ver. 14.) I am carnal, and sold under Sin.*

So that the customary Sinner is in the worst Sense a Slave both by Conquest and Purchase, and so he will appear most notoriously to be, if we take a more distinct View of him under the following Particulars. And

1<sup>st</sup>, By Way of *Analogy*, or in some Kind of Proportion to civil Servitude, the Sinner is perfectly out of his own Power, that is, out of the Power of his Reason, and subject to his imperious Lusts. And by this means he is under an Impotency and Inability of *doing* what is most worthy of his rational Choice, and a Necessity of doing what he ought most industriously to avoid; answerable to that heavy Complaint of the *Apostle's* in the Chapter afore-cited, ver. 19. *The Good that I would, that I do not; but the Evil which I would not, that I do: i.e. The Good, which by the Dictates of sober Reason, and Conscience truly informed, I am prompted to do, that, being countermanded by my Lusts, I do not: But the Evil which I cannot*



not in my Mind and Conscience but condemn, **SERM.**  
*that, at the Instigation of my still predomi-* **XII.**  
*nant Lusts, I do.* 

This is what every Sinner experiences in himself, as often as he Sins against Knowledge and Conscience, and feels at least some weak Reluctance wrestling with a strong Inclination. Not that he is originally destitute of all Freedom of Choice, and at once disabled from doing that which is good and unavoidably determined to that which is evil. For, were there no such Thing as free Will, Men would be utterly incapable both of Rewards and Punishments.

No Man was ever so vain as to arrogate Merit to himself, that he was not created a Worm : No Man was ever so weak as to charge himself with it for a Fault that he was not made equal to the Angels : For the Rank we hold in the Creation, was solely at the Will of our Maker, and not in our own Election. And where there is no Room for Choice, there can be none for Praise or Dispraise, neither for Self-complacency, or Self-condemnation. The Dissatisfaction of Mind therefore, the inward Remorse which the Sinner feels must arise from a conscious Sense,  
that

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that he has abused his own Liberty in doing that which he ought not to have done, and might have left undone; or in omitting that which he ought to have done, and might, if he had so pleased.

Were it otherwise; were he supposed to be under an insuperable Necessity, even from the Beginning, of doing just as he did, he might fruitlessly lament over the sensible ill Consequences of his Actions if he would, but he could not strictly condemn himself for them, he could not properly repent of them, as feeling no *self-consciousness* that they are his proper own, that they are the Effect of his free Choice, or that it was ever in his Power to do better.

I do not intend however hereby to retract what I before advanced, that the Sinner (whom I am now proving to be no better than a Slave) is really impotent to do that Good which he would, and necessitated to do the Evil, he would not. For most certainly there is a Time when it is even so with him; and this is the very Badge of his Slavery. But this is a Necessity which he wilfully brought himself under, by a long Habit and constant Practice of sinning. And Custom

Custom at length makes it little less than natural, and creates a Sort of vicious Appetite of committing Sin, that is every whit as keen, and returns as constantly and frequently as his very Hunger and Thirst. And by this Time the Power of his Lusts is become not only prevalent, but almost irresistible: his foolish Heart is darkened: his wicked Will thoroughly debauched: his executive Powers all prest into the Service: and his Conscience stupified and made insensible.

And thus with an abject Spirit suitable to his slavish Condition he is chained, (as it were) to the Oar, and held fast by the Cords of his Sins, and is perpetually drudging at the wretched Work of his *Taskmaster* the Devil, which puts me in Mind of another Mark of his Slavery, *viz.*

2dly, The Drudgery and Hardship which he is continually forced to undergo. For inordinate Lust is always coveting and craving that which is Evil, and a wicked Heart is always contriving it; and therefore the habitual Sinner must always be in Readiness to put it in Execution, which yet it is impossible to do without vast Pains and Assiduity, besides infinite Difficulties and Disappointments,

ments, Perplexities and Distractions, which will interfere, and give him Trouble in the Accomplishment of his sinful Desires.

The Examples of this are as many as there are reigning Vices in the World. For the Service of Sin is always laborious, and yet seldom answers Expectation.

Observe it, among others, in the *Covetous Man*. What prodigious Pains does he take, what Difficulties does he run through, what Severities does he practise upon himself only to be *imaginarily* rich, but really poor?

For is *his Eye satisfied with Riches* when he has them in Possession? No; but every Addition that he makes to his Estate, is like a fresh Draught in a Dropsy, that distends his Body and yet inflames his Thirst.

Is his Heart any thing at Rest when his Wealth encreases with his Wishes? No; but he is incessantly tormented with Cares and Fears, and spends a wearisome and wretched Life amidst the Toil of getting, and the Anxiety of keeping, and improving what he doats upon?

And is his Soul filled with Good at last, with all his Abundance. No; for he has not Power to eat thereof, nay, he cannot for much



much as say to himself, *for whom do I labour, and bereave my Soul of Good.* (*Eccles. iv. 8.*) And is not this *a sore Travel?* (as Solomon calls it (*Eccles. i. 18.*) Is it not an insupportable Slavery?

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The like may be observed of *Ambition*, which is a Mistress as hard to serve as *Covetousness* itself. For the Man that aspires at Honour and Greatness, what mean and unworthy Compliances must he stoop to, to attain his End? how must he adore that false Grandeur, which he inwardly envies, and endeavours to supplant? how must he fawn and flatter, and cheat and lie, and part with his Honesty to purchase the Name of that Honour, which he climbs to with Difficulty, and maintains with Danger.

And it is much if such a Man can tell where to set Bounds to his Vanity, it is much if he be not for aspiring still higher, till at last he raises the Suspicion of those that are above him, or the Envy of those below him, or else by placing himself on an Eminence, he makes his Vices more conspicuous, and draws the greater Contempt upon himself. This is commonly the Manner of the *Ambitious*, and it is undoubtedly as great a Piece of Baseness

ness and Servility, as a Man can well be guilty of.

The same is remarkably true of the *Intemperate* and *Uncaste*. They who are strongly addicted to these Vices, and deeply engaged in the Practice of them, are observed to abandon the Care of their Business, of themselves, their Families, good Names, and Estates, and to give up their whole Time and Health and Strength, to the wearisome Pursuit of those licentious Pleasures, to which they are such very Slaves, that they are not only willing but eager to destroy both Body and Soul in their Service.

The abject Servitude of the latter, i. e. the *Libidinous* Person, is so finely painted by *Tully*, that it must needs strike any one under that sad Captivity, to see his own Likeness taken so exactly from the Life. He first defines Servitude to be the Obedience of a broken, abject Mind, that has no Will of its own. And if this be so, says he, who can deny, but all they who are swayed by any irregular Desire, all wicked Men in short are downright Slaves. And then he gives us the Picture of the Man who is addicted to Women in such Colours, as no Time will wear

out

out. [" An ille mihi liber, cui Mulier im-  
" perat, cui Leges imponit, præscribit, jubet,  
" vetat quod videtur? Qui nihil imperanti  
" negare potest, nihil recusare audet? Poscit?  
" dandum est. Vocat? veniendum. Ejicit?  
" abeundum. Minatur? extimescendum.  
" Ego vero non modo Servum, sed nequissi-  
" mum Servum, etiamsi in amplissimâ Fa-  
" miliâ natus sit, appellandum puto.] That  
is to say, if ye can pardon my flattering the  
*Spirit* of it by a Translation. " Can I  
" reckon him a Freeman whom a Woman,  
" a *whorish Woman* domineers over, prescrib-  
" ing Rules, imposing Laws, commanding,  
" countermanding, just what she lists? He  
" cannot deny, nor dare he refuse any Thing  
" to this imperious Mistress. At her De-  
" mand he must give, at her Call he must  
" come, turned out of Doors he must trudge:  
" Nay, if she does but threaten it, he is all  
" in a *Panick*: For my Part, I think such  
" a Man as this not only deserves the Name  
" of a Slave, but of the most vile and worth-  
" less of all Slaves, even tho' of a great Fa-  
" mily and Fortune."

This is *Tully's* Representation of a *lustful*  
Person: And is it possible for any one that

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*ſees his natural Face even in this Glaſs, to go his Way, and forget what manner of Man he is?* Much more, if he caſts his Eyes upon this *Mirroure*, where he cannot but diſcover whoſe Slave he is, and what *Task-maſter* he is ſubject to, and what his Wages are like to be; that the Houſe he frequents is *the Way to Hell, and goeth down to the Chambers of Death.* (*Prov. vii. 27.*). And that which makes the Servitude of the wicked ſtill harder to be borne, is their being ſo frequently devoted to the Service of divers Luſts at once, whoſe Interests are ſo contrary each to other. Thus in the Examples already before us. The *covetous Man*, not unlikely, is a *Niggard* to his *own Soul*, and does a perpetual Penance in denying himſelf thoſe Gratifications, which his Luxury impetuoſly craves. And ſo likewiſe the *ambitious* Perſon is forced to enjoin himſelf a long Humiliation, whiſt he is aiming to riſe, and is obliged frequently to make thoſe low Condeſcensions, which his haughty Pride diſdains. And if he has any ſtrong Propenſion to Exceſs and Licentiousneſs, to croſs the Deſigns, and defeat the Attempts of his Ambition; the Folly of his Intemperance may not only diſconcert the

Gravity,



Gravity, but betray all the Cunning of the *Statist*; and the Range he gives to his filthy Lusts may make it notorious to the Observation of the World, how unworthy he is of the Superiority he contends for among Men, who can be so scandalously subject to the worst of Women.

These I confess which I have laid before you, are some of the most flagrant Instances of the base Servility of an habitual Sinner. But the Case is much the same in all other Instances. When a Man is much habituated to any Vice, he is so far not Master of himself, but under the Direction of the reigning Passion, which never fails to exert its Power, whenever any suitable Occasion presents itself.

In short, a wicked Man has as many Masters, as many Tyrants over him, as he harbours domineering Lusts in his Heart, all of which are unreasonable in their Impositions, and cruel in their Exactions, and some of them at the same Time quarrellous and irreconcilable with one another. And thus the *poor Vassal* is constantly engaged, but often distracted in his Service; for whilst he does his best Diligence to be as wicked as

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he *can*, he cannot at all Points be so wicked as he would: and yet the *Fury* that is not punctually obeyed, never ceases to torment him, notwithstanding his willing Mind. And can there be any State more abjectly servile, and truly miserable than this? But

3dly, That which renders the Case still more deplorable, is the little Hope that there is of any Deliverance. If indeed there were any hopeful Prospect of a Release at last, even Slavery itself might sit something lighter, and be more easily supported. How rare is it to find a *covetous Man* renouncing his Love to the World? On the contrary, is it not commonly and truly observed of him, that he then most passionately doats on it, when he cannot have long to live in it? That he then clings fastest to this Earth, when the Grave is ready for him, and the only Mansion he has left to take Possession of?

So for those who follow the Chace of *Ambition*, how very seldom are they known to quit the Field, in Order to return into themselves, or cast an Eye up towards Heaven, and seek for the *Honour* and *Glory*, and *Immortality* of another World? How much oftener is it, that they are surprized by Death,

as *Archimedes* was at the sacking of *Syracuse*, drawing subtle Schemes for the Depression and Extirpation of their Enemies, and their own greater Exaltation, and lasting Establishment?

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And then for the thorough pac'd *Debauchee*, is it not next to a Prodigy almost, to hear that such an one is thoroughly reformed? How much more frequent is it for their Lusts still to burn on, after their natural Heat is greatly abated? Are not their filthy Tongues too often the Interpreters of a tainted Mind, that can take Pleasure in boasting of their former Wickedness, and repeating it over in lewd Imagination, even when their Body enfeebled by Age or Disease, can no longer have any Partnership in it; that can dwell with *morose Delight* (as the *Schools* call it) upon the Remembrance of those Sins which have rather left them, than been left by them?

The Truth is, there is such vast Difficulty in breaking off old Wonts, in rooting out inveterate Habits, and giving a new Bent to all the Affections, and Purposes of the Heart, as well as a new Face to the outward Action, that such great Reformatations are ranked in Holy Scripture, even with natural Impossibilities.

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*Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do Good, who are accustomed to do Evil,* (says the Prophet *Jeremy* xiii. 23.) As if Custom passing into very Nature, had made this also equally impossible with the other. And doubtless it is not in the Will of Man, thus depraved and enthralled, to work so great a Change in itself. It is the Grace of God alone (and that no ordinary Measure of it neither) that can perform this mighty Wonder. And what Reason has that Man to expect the extraordinary Aids of divine Grace, who has obstinately opposed himself to all its common Methods, and resisted its kindly Influence? It is true, nothing is impossible with God: he may, if he thinks good, rescue even such a *Wretch* by some uncommon Providence or Miracle of Mercy. But there is no Promise for it, and therefore it is Presumption, it is Madness to depend upon it. And for such as sin on in this Presumption, if their Case be not desperate already, they are in a sure Way to make it so.

4thly and lastly, To shew that the habitual and impenitent Sinner is in the worst Condition even of the worst of Slaves, the Fruit of his



*is the Servant of Sin.*

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his Sins is little or nothing, or at best but *Vanity* and *Vexation of Spirit*, even in the enjoying; and the Remembrance of them is always attended with Shame and Confusion; and the Conclusion is certain and inevitable Destruction. *For the End of those Things is Death*, saith St. Paul, (*Rom. vi. 21.*)

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It was anciently the hard Fate of those who were taken captive in War, that they lost their Liberty, to enjoy an uncertain and precarious Life, which though respited from Time to Time, was still in the arbitrary Power of the *Conqueror*, and never out of Danger.

But with the impenitent Sinner it is still worse: for as he is *under the Power of Satan*, and *led captive by him at his Will*, and continually employed in his Work, *so the Wages of his Sin is Death*, and after a Life spent in cruel Bondage here, he is reserved for eternal Damnation hereafter. And then the Devil that has all along been his severe Master, will become his inexorable Tormentor for ever and ever.

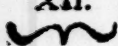
For what remains I shall only make a few practical Reflections upon the whole, and so conclude. And

*Iſt*, From what has been ſaid, we may eaſily ſee how vaſt the Difference is between the *Service of God, which is perfect Freedom*, and the *Service of Sin, which is cruel Slavery*. Chriſt himſelf has told us *that his Yoke is eaſy and his Burden light*. (*Matt. xi. 30.*) A Character of the *Chriſtian Religion* as true as it is inviting. For doubtleſs if Sinners could once find in their Hearts to form the Compariſon upon Experience, they would find Reason to pronounce that there is more Labour, more Difficulty, more unreaſonable Subjection, and abject Servility in gratifying their own ſinful Luſts, than in obeying God's holy Will. They would be convinced that it is more eaſy to perform the very difficulteſt Duties in Religion, to undergo the ſevereſt Mortification, to bear the heaviest Croſs that Chriſt thinks fit to lay upon his Followers, and with all this Weight, to climb up to Heaven much more eaſily, than to be chained down to do all that wearifome and infinite Drudgery, that the Devil will exact from us. Oh! therefore let none of us be ſo fatally induſtrious to work our own Ruin, let us not take ſuch mighty Pains to purchaſe Damnation and merit Hell, by ſuch

an unnatural Sort of *Martyrdom*, but rather let us be persuaded to make the happy Experiment for ourselves, *and taste and see how gracious our good God is*; how little burdensome comparatively the very strictest of his Commands, how much more smooth and pleasant the Way to Heaven (were we but once well entered upon it) even than that broad, and much trodden Path that *leads down to the Chambers of Death.*

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2dly, We may learn from what has been said, upon what mighty Disadvantage it is that Men indulge themselves in vicious Habits: For they cannot do it without parting with their Liberty. And yet in other Cases they do not love to be constrained to do, even what they would otherwise chuse to do. But the Power of evil Habits is most wretchedly enslaving, it *brings a Man in Bondage to his own tyrannical Lusts*, and he is necessitated to obey them, and he is forced to be perpetually toiling at what he proposed to himself as his only Pleasure. And there is this very remarkable Difference between him that is habitually wicked, and him that is habitually virtuous; that to the former, the more he is practised in Sin, and the more he drudges



drudges at it, the harder does his Task grow, and the heavier his Burden; but to the latter, by a little Uſe and Practice, his Work proves eaſy and delightful, and his very Duty is his Privilege. And let this be an Encouragement to us all to make Virtue our Choice, and we ſhall ſoon find, that by Cuſtom it will become our Pleaſure.

3dly and laſtly, We may learn from what has been ſaid, what a pernicious and ruinous Bargain the habitual Sinner makes for himſelf; for *he ſells himſelf to work Wickedneſs*, he ſells himſelf into the worſt of all Slave-ries, and the very Price he contracts for is his Punishment. In one Word, he makes himſelf as miſerable as well he can, in this Life, in Order to be infinitely more ſo, as if it were his Deſign to prepare and enure himſelf to bear the everlaſting Torments of Hell-Fire. And ſince this is the unavoidable Conſequence of an habitual and impenitent Continuance in Sin, let us all take Warning in Time.

And by the Aid and Succour of divine Grace, let us inſtantly reſolve and actually endeavour *to break theſe fatal Bonds aſunder*, and caſt off this intolerable Yoke that galls



*is the Servant of Sin.*

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us so much at present, and if we do not  
get rid of it, will torment us for ever. To  
the End therefore that we may be delivered  
from it, let us earnestly pray, as the Church  
well dictates to us. ‘ O God whose Nature and  
‘ Property is ever to have Mercy and for-  
‘ give, receive our humble Petitions, and  
‘ tho’ we be tied and bound with the Chain  
‘ of our Sins, yet let the Pitifulness of thy  
‘ great Mercy loose us, for the Honour of  
‘ Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate.  
‘ *Amen.*

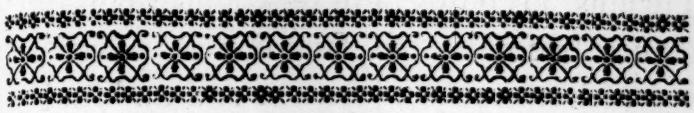
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SERMON

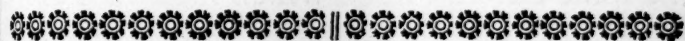
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## S E R M O N XIII.

Of the Uncertainty of future Events.



PROVERBS xxvii. 1.

*Boast not thy self of to Morrow, for  
thou knowest not what a Day may  
bring forth.*

**T**HERE is nothing almost that puts SERM.  
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human Wisdom more out of Coun-  
tenance, nothing indeed that more  
exposes the Weakness and Vanity of poor  
Mortals, than to see them (as most frequent-  
ly they are) so busy in framing their notable  
Projects,

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Projects, so eager in following their several Pursuits, so confident in reckoning upon their future Successes, so sanguine in promising themselves much Enjoyment and undisturbed Security, whilst God in the mean Time is left out of all their Schemes, his Council and Consent unasked, his Providence neither depended on nor regarded, who is the sole Disposer of all Events, and therefore ought to be the prime Director of all Men's Actions.

The wise Man therefore, to take away all the loose Ground upon which such vain Confidence is built, refers us at once to the universal Experience of Mankind, concerning the *Uncertainty* of all that is *future*. *Boast not thyself* (says he) *of to Morrow, for thou knowest not what a Day may bring forth.* Thy Foresight, (pore-blind as thou art) is much too short to discern (even at the small Distance of a Day) what the Fruit of thy Labours and thy Hopes is like to be, or what may intervene to blast thy shallow Designs, or defeat thy fond Expectations. All that thou canst conclude for certain is, that it will be both thy Folly, and thy Sin, at any Time to please or pride thy self upon that which thou canst not call thy own, nor tell what it may

prove,



prove, a meer uncertain Futurity. And I SERM.  
XIII. hope you will afford me your Attention, whilst I am speaking of a Thing that deserves well to be considered, tho' it be too generally overlooked. Give me Leave therefore

*First*, In the 1<sup>st</sup> Place, to descant upon that which is Matter of never-failing Experience, the Uncertainty, I mean, of all future Events; for uncertain they are, and must be.

*Secondly*, I shall shew that it is ordered and contrived that so they should be for very wise and good Reasons.

*Thirdly*, I shall conclude from hence that it is a foolish and a wicked Thing for Men to presume upon the contrary, or to become arrogant and secure upon such idle Hopes.

*First*, I shall descant upon that which is Matter of never-failing Experience, the Uncertainty of all future Events, for uncertain they are, and must be.

That they are so, the perpetual Vicissitude of things, and the daily Changes and Chances that happen in the World, are Proof enough to every one, that makes any Use of his Eyes. For is it not every Day seen, that the Merchant's

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chant's massy Wealth is scattered on the sudden in a Storm, and becomes a Spoil to the devouring Sea ; that the frugal Tradesman's whole Substance is consumed in one Night, by the merciless Fire ; that the once happy and fruitful Mother of Children is unexpectedly bereaved of all her Comfort, and made an incessant Mourner for the Loss of them which he doated on ; that the riotous Liver, who surfeited upon Plenty, is brought to ask for that Morsel of Alms that must keep him from starving, and that the Bitterness of unlooked for Death approaching, spoils the Relish of Life's sweetest Pleasures, and suddenly puts an End to all Enjoyment.

Nor is there any Rank of Life, or Pitch of Power and Greatness, that can boast itself free from these giddy Turns and Shocks of Fortune. The Man that is to Day her *Mignon*, caressed, beloved, adored by every Body, to Morrow shall be neglected, despised, hated and condemned by his chief Admirers. He that is one Day valiant, wise, noble, the next shall be voted a Traitor, a Coward, and a Villain ; and down go his Statues by the very Hands that erected them. He that is to Day a mighty Commander, proud of his  
Laurel

Laurels won, and ambitious of more, becomes upon the Fate of one Battle, a Captive in Disgrace, and a Spectacle of Entertainment to his Enemies. Even Crowns themselves are tottering Things, and Majesty carries no Protection against Vicissitude or Violence. Princes, when least they have dreamt of it, have been forced to quit the Palace, and take up their Lodgings in a Prison; and a *haughty Bajazet* has been made the *Foot-fool* of an *insulting Tamerlane*. A *Massinello* has started up in the Space of twenty four Hours, and great and surprizing Revolutions have turned about upon the smallest Hinges, and the Motion has been so sudden and so quick, that it carried the Spectators Heads round, and the Change has been effected whilst the People have stood gazing and wondering. And the Direction of all these various Occurrences and Events is so little within the View of human Prudence, or the Reach of human Power, that the *Wise-Man* saw Reason enough to lay it down as an experienced Truth, (Eccles. ix. 11.) *That the Race is not to the swift, nor the Battle to the strong; neither yet Bread to the wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to*

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*Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them all.* Such, so mutable is the Condition, so precarious the Duration of all that the World calls prosperous or fortunate.

And so it must needs be, for all worldly Prosperity is owing to so many concurring Circumstances, and is liable to so many Casualties and Contingencies, that it cannot (humanly speaking) be kept in any fixed State, nor settled upon any stable Foundation. Because Events purely contingent, cannot be foreseen by mortal Eyes, nor reduced to any certain Rule. And if in the present Conjuncture we should happen to be as easy and as happy as Heart could wish, yet we cannot one Moment ensure that contingent Happiness to ourselves. Because we are not able to foresee what Accident shall start up to interrupt the Course of our good Fortune; and what we cannot foresee, how should we go about to prevent? Besides, the Welfare and Safety of Life depends in a great Measure on the Disposition and Affection that others bear towards us, on our Friendships and Alliances, the Interests we espouse or oppose, and the like. In all which having to do with Creatures that are free as well



well as frail, that Share of our Happiness that depends upon them, must be liable to vary as they vary. Nor can we safely rely upon the Fidelity and Constancy of our Friends, or think ourselves sufficiently secure from the Malice of our Enemies, unless we had it in our Power to overrule Men's Wills as we please, and bring them entirely to our own Beck : which is an absolute Impossibility.

But the most fatal Uncertainty of all, is that of Life itself ; which is so very a *Vapour*, that it may vanish into Air, for ought we know, the very next Breath we draw ; nay, we may suck in our Death every Moment, in that very Action of Breathing that is so necessary to the Continuation of Life. *And verily, since every Man living in his best Estate is altogether Vanity*, all his earthly Possessions and Enjoyments can be no better : for the Satisfactions of Life can be no more certain or durable, than Life itself is.

Add to all these Considerations, that we and all our Concerns are in the Hand of God the great Governor of the World. And as the wise Man speaks (*Proverbs xvi. 33.*) with just Reverence, *The Lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord :*

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Events that appear to us purely casual (as what can be more so than the casting of a Lot?) are still under his Care and Management. And even the Actions of free Agents, *He*, by his gentle Guidance, can make subservient to his own Purposes, without offering any Force to their natural Freedom. In a Word, he is the Disposer of all that is within us, and all that is about us, and even of Life itself, and he disposeth of all as it seems best to his fatherly Wisdom and Goodness. But, his Determinations concerning these Matters he has kindly kept out of our Sight, the Times and Seasons he has wisely reserved in his own Power. In the mean time we may be sufficiently convinced that we are not, we cannot be certain of any Thing in this World; for the Nature of Things won't admit of it, and the Counsels of God have otherwise determined it. And I should not have said so much upon that which is obvious to every one's Notice, but that we are too apt to overlook what is commonly known, tho' it be never so useful and proper to be considered.

*Secondly,*

Secondly, I proceed now to shew, that it is ordered and contrived that Things future should remain in this Uncertainty, and that for very wise and good Reasons.

For they are not therefore uncertain because they are left to the Arbitrement of *blind Chance*. No! That Chance itself, as I observed but now, is always under Direction, and there is a Providence that both ordains and governs all these Uncertainties. Even the *Heathen Poet* seems to have had some discerning of the Wisdom of Providence in so disposing Things when he expressed himself so significantly.

<sup>a</sup> *Prudens futuri temporis exitum  
Caliginosâ nocte premit Deus.*

For it is undoubtedly a wise and kind Provision of the Almighty, to wrap up the Issues of Things future, in Darkness too thick for our Eyes to penetrate; because if Men were permitted to pry into Futurity, they would ever be indulging that unhappy Cu-

<sup>a</sup> *Horat. Carm. Lib. III. 29, 30,*

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riosity, and neglect the present, and render their whole Lives both useles and uncomfortable, by a solicitous Anticipation of that which is to come. Which being in greatest Part hidden from them, they may, if it be not their own Fault, have more of the true Enjoyment of Life, and less of the Anxiety. But not to insist longer upon this, there are other Reasons that do still more evidently bespeak the Wisdom and Goodness of divine Providence, in making the Events of Things so uncertain to us as they are.

I shall mention but two that seem to be of the nearest Importance to us.

1<sup>st</sup>, The first is, that this was a very proper Means, to abate that natural Fondness that we are apt to have of the World, and all its Entertainments, and to raise our Minds to the Prospect and Desire of Things far more excellent. For if *the Lovers of this World* could make themselves secure of the Permanency of the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures in which they place too much of their Felicity, it may well be imagined, considering the Eagerness of their Passions, that they would be much more violent in their Pursuits, and more licentious in their Enjoyments



ments than already they are ; but since the Scene of this World is so very changeable, always shifting from one Vanity to another ; since Things are still hovering in perpetual Uncertainty ; since the Period of Life is naturally so short, and may be cut yet shorter every Moment, by thousands of unforeseen Accidents, this doubtless must be some Check even to the unreasonable *Lusts* of Men ; but if they will but consider with themselves, and reason like Men, it must amount to a full Conviction that there is nothing amidst all these Uncertainties that is worthy of our Affection, nothing that can afford us any solid or durable Happiness. And at the same Time, as it is natural for Men still to pant after Happiness, the very Sense of this Disappointment can hardly fail to put them upon seeking farther, for something that has not only the Appearance, but the Substance of Happiness ; and Substance enough to fill and satisfy all their Desires, which can be nothing short of that *blessed Life and Immortality reserved in Heaven* for the Sons of Men. And this the more they look into, the more they will be assured of it : (for this is a Futurity of which we may be certain) and the more

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they are assured of it, the more will they desire it; and the more they desire it, the more they will labour after it, (for there is no Uncertainty or Disappointment in Heaven) as *knowing that their Labour shall not be in vain.*

2dly, Another Reason of the Instability of Things, and the Obscurity of future Events is, that by this means the Belief of a Providence, and the Sense of that Dependence which Men must necessarily have upon it, is kept fresh in Men's Minds; and withal the Variety of God's providential Dispensations, is through his Grace made conducive to the Purposes of Religion. For, as slippery as the State of Things now is, Plenty and Prosperity is but too apt to make Men arrogant, forgetful, and unthankful; but could Men that are once in a prosperous Condition by any Insight into Futurity discern the Wheel of Fortune fixed, and be well assured that it would remain so, this in all Probability would tempt them to grow still vainer in their Imaginations, and more insolent in their Behaviour towards God and Man, and swell them up perhaps at last to the *blasphemous Conceit*, that they are absolute Lords of themselves,

Independent upon any Superior, nor so much as owning a Debt of Thanks to their great Creator and Preserver; but instead of that boldly disowning his very Providence and Being. Whereas according to that variable Course which now obtains in the World, Men cannot flatter themselves into a Persuasion, that Life itself or any of its Enjoyments is really secure to them so much as for one Moment: And therefore they cannot but be convinced that they hold all they have at the Will of their Sovereign Lord, even *the Lord of the whole Earth*; and that they are accountable to him, for all that they have received at his Hands; and that he can call them to Account whenever he pleases, without any Warning; nay, that he can make Use of any of the numberless Accidents that vary the Fortune of Man's Life as the Instruments of his sudden Vengeance. Which Thing well weighed and considered must needs beget and preserve in Men's Hearts a reverential Regard to the Providence of God, and a meek Submission to his Will, and a perpetual Dread of misapplying, abusing or perverting any of his good Gifts to the Dishonour of the Donor. In Brief, there is nothing

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thing could be of greater Service to make Men truly thankful and humble and pious in all Estates and Conditions; and to teach them the rare Art of *so using this World as not to abuse it, and of so passing thro' Things temporal, as finally not to lose the Things eternal.* And what has been alledged under these two last Heads, may sufficiently account for the uncertain Disposition of Things, and the industrious Concealment of future Events, from the Notice of short-sighted Mortals.

*Thirdly,* And lastly, I may now venture to conclude from the whole, that it is a very foolish and wicked Thing to presume upon any Certainty or Stability in human Affairs, or to grow arrogant and secure upon such idle and ill-grounded Hopes. And this is a Case that speaks so clearly for itself, that it will need but very few Words after what has been already said.

For first it must be censured for an egregious Piece of Folly to take up a fond Opinion at all Adventures, that is contradicted by every Day's Observation and every Man's Experience; and yet so does the Man that can find in his Heart to presume upon that



for certain, which in the Nature of the Thing must remain uncertain, and which no Mortal yet could ever find to be otherwise.

If it be suggested that there is no Need that a Man should entertain a Persuasion that the Affairs of this World are upon any Bottom of Certainty, because he does not, in his Conduct, shew himself much concerned about their Uncertainty, let it be granted if you please: But then this is much more absurd sure than the other; for a Man to act contrary to his own Opinion and Judgment, as well as the universal Experience and unavoidable Fate of other Men. And yet, so does he that lives securely, carelessly, and thoughtlessly, as if he were absolutely the Master of Fortune, and of all Accidents and Events, and even of his own Life and Soul, when he knows, and cannot but know, that they are all forfeitable at Pleasure, and may be required of him every Instant.

But it is still more extravagant and ridiculous, for any Man to vaunt himself and lift up his Head proudly above his Neighbours, supplanting some, insulting others, and despising all. As if, because he is at present the uncertain and unworthy Possessor of  
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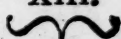
much mouldring Wealth or fading Honour; his *inward Thoughts* were, *that his House should be continued for ever, and his Lands be called after his Name*, (Psalm xlix. 11.) and his Titles never be forgotten or extinct. Whereas not one of these glittering Appendages of Life are exempt from Hazard and Vicissitude; nor has he a longer or a firmer Lease of Life, than any the meanest whom he most despises. And if any notable Change of Fortune should befall such a Man as this, if any great Calamity should happen to overtake him, the Remembrance of his former Insolence will go near to shut out that Compassion that is seldom denied to the distressed: He will fall unpitied and unlamented, with all the Load of that Contempt, which he once poured upon others, now heaped upon himself, whilst every one that knows him will be able to read the Reason of his Destiny, and say with the Psalmist, (Psalm lii. 7.) *Loe, this is the Man that made not God his Strength, but trusted in the Abundance of his Riches, and strengthened himself in his Wickedness.* This the Way therefore of such Men is apparently their Folly.

2dly, Bu

*of future Events.*

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2dly, But it is their great Sin too, and therefore the more exceedingly foolish.

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For when Men will adventure to rely upon the Largeness of their Estates, or their high Place, the Power of their Friends, or the Extent of their Interest, and their own Dexterity in managing all to certain Advantage; this argues not only an unthankful Disregard of God's good Providence, but a manifest Distrust of it; and at the same Time a presumptuous Confidence in the Arm of Flesh, and a Recourse to secular Aids, that are no more to be depended on than a *rotten Reed*, which is surely an Offence of a very heinous Kind, and of near Affinity in some Sense, to the Sin of Idolatry.

And when Men will extend their Thought to Things future and contingent, and lay long Trains, and chain one Event to another, and confidently reckon upon adjusting every Thing, and finishing the whole Scheme as it is framed in their own Heads, without once consulting God's Will, or imploring his Blessing; this is a fresh Affront added to the former, and may seem to imply the Guilt of aspiring to a Likeness with God, in certainly foreseeing future and casual Events, and skilfully applying them to secret Purposes of their own. Once

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Once more, when Men are so puffed up and blinded by a long Course of Prosperity, that they can hardly dream of any possible Interruption, but lull themselves asleep in their carnal Security, and brutish Sensuality, and give themselves up to all Manner of Riot and Disorder, this is another Aggravation of their Sin, and a direct Provocation to that God who *is the Maker of all Men*, and the Judge of the whole Earth, to execute some sudden remarkable Vengeance upon such presumptuous Offenders, who seem to set his Providence at Nought, and his Power at Defiance, even whilst they are wilfully abusing themselves and the Rest of his good Creatures. And the Folly, Sin, and Fate of such *Self-confident Men* are plainly enough described in the Parable of the *Rich Man* in the Gospel, (*Luke xii. 19, 20, 21.*) who said to his Soul, *My Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* But God said unto him, *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee; then whose shall those Things be which thou hast provided?* So is he that layeth up Treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. And the same may be collected from



*of future Events.*

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the Doom of that evil Servant who should lay in his Heart, *My Lord delayeth his coming, and should therefore begin to smite his fellow Servants, and eat and drink with the Drunkard. But the Lord of that Servant, (it is added) shall come in a Day when he looketh not for him, and in an Hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with Hypocrites, (Luke xii. 45, 46.)* And the Accusation and Sentence against Babylon, (*Isai. xlvii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.*) proceedeth much upon the same Reason: *Thou hast said, I shall be a Lady for ever, &c. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to Pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thy Heart, I am, and none else beside me, I shall not sit as a Widow, nor know the Loss of Children. But these two Things shall come unto thee in a Moment, in one Day, Loss of Children and Widowhood: They shall come upon thee in your Perfection; for thou hast trusted in thy Wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me; thy Wisdom, and thy Knowledge it hath perverted thee. Therefore shall Evil fall upon thee, thou shalt not know whence it riseth, and Mischief shall fall upon thee, thou shalt not be able to put it off.* The plain Result of which

is,

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is, that carnal Presumption is a most provoking Sin, in the Sight of God, and that there are no kind of Sinners whom God delights as it were to humble more than such proud Boasters and Blasphemers.

And I hope by this Time, enough has been said to make you duly sensible, *First*, that there is, and must be a perpetual Uncertainty as to all the Affairs of Life, especially future Events, since the Nature of Things require it, and the Will of God has so determined. And, *Secondly*, That it is ordered by Providence that it should be so, for Reasons that are evidently wise and good. And *Lastly*, That it is a very foolish and a wicked Thing, for any Man to presume upon the contrary, and to grow arrogant and secure upon such idle and groundless Hopes. *Boast not thyself of to Morrow, for thou canst not tell what a Day may bring forth.* Which being a very profitable Lesson, suffer me now only to leave the Application of it with you, in two or three Particulars, and I shall make an End.

*1<sup>st</sup>* then, Let us learn from what has been observed upon this wise *Maxim* of Solomon, not to set too high a Value upon any of the earthly Goods, nor to misbestow any great Degree

Degree of Affection upon them. For we SERM.  
plainly see what the Nature and Condition XIII.

of them is; they are all moveable and mutable. Riches have Wings and swiftly pass from one Hand to another. Honour is a glaring Meteor that blazes for a Time and is soon extinct. Reputation is an airy Bubble, blown up and broke at Pleasure, by the fickle Breath of the injudicious Multitude. In a Word, Power is precarious; Pleasure is a very Fugitive, and so is Life itself; and therefore what real Good, what solid Satisfaction can there be in any of these things? Without Doubt, if we expect it from them, we shall find ourselves mistaken in our Account, and *reap* nothing in the End *but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. To prevent which wretched Disappointment, our only Way must be to fix our Hearts upon *heavenly Treasures*, which *no Moth, nor Rust can corrupt*, and to place our Affections entirely upon God, who is immutably and inexhaustibly good, *the same Yesterday, to Day, and for Ever*.

*2dly*, Since these Things deserve so little of our Esteem and Love, even whilst they are present, and since their Continuance with us is so very uncertain, let us lay aside all our

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worldly cunning and vain projecting as useless, let our foolish boasting cease; let us not extend our Hopes to what is distant, and perhaps even beyond the Term of our short Lives, saying with the profane Persons that fall under St. James's just Reproof, (iv. 13, &c.) *To Day or to Morrow we will go into such a City and continue there a Year, and buy and sell and get Gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the Morrow. For what is your Life? It is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away; for that we ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.* The former Speech favouring only of carnal Confidence and Presumption, which it is most just in God to disappoint and confound; whereas the latter proceeds from an humble Resignation to the Will of God, and a firm Trust and Affiance in him, and therefore may reasonably expect his divine Favour and Benediction.

3dly, and lastly, Since all that we possess or enjoy here below, is attended with so much Uncertainty, and since Futurity is beyond our *Ken*, and out of our Power, let us be careful without Delay to make the best Improvement of what is present, not to the



Indulgence of the Flesh in all Kind of Voluptuousness (which is the wicked Use that loose *Poets* are wont to make of the Shortness and Insecurity of human Life) but to all the best and wisest Purposes of Living.

Is any Man therefore possessed of Riches, let him be sure to do good whilst he may, *giving a Portion to seven, and also to eight, as not knowing what Evil shall be upon the Earth, (Ecclesiastes xi. 2.) Let him be rich in good Works, and thereby lay up for himself in Store a good Foundation against the Time to come, that he may attain to eternal Life. (1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.)* Is any Man in great Dignity? Let not this serve only to make his Vices more conspicuous; but let him strive to be as eminent in Virtue, as he is high in Rank and Station, that so by his shining Example, some Honour may be reflected back upon God, to whom he owes that Distinction which he bears in the World. Is any Man in Power and Authority? Let him make Use of it not to oppress, or crush his Fellow-Creatures, and Fellow-Servants, but to cherish and protect them, and oblige them by all such Acts of Kindness and Beneficence, as may convince them that he is really aiming at their Benefit.

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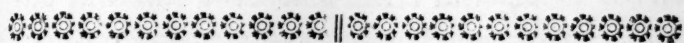
Is any Man endued with the Gift of Wisdom? Let him employ it not to supplant and pull down, but to build up and establish, not to do hurt (which is the little Aim of Craft or Cunning) but to do good (which is the Glory of true Wisdom, as well as Power) and let him study to be wise for his own good too, let him learn in Time to be wise for Eternity.

In fine, whatsoever Talent any Man has received of God, let him neglect no Opportunity, but apply it to its proper Use, with all his Might and Industry, as remembering that *there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge nor Wisdom in the Grave whither he is going*. Let him discharge his Duty and his Trust diligently, and get ready in Time for his future Accounts. *For blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily that good and faithful Servant shall be made Ruler of many Things, and enter into the Joy of his Lord.* And God grant that we may be all so found, and so received in the Day of the Lord Jesus. Amen.



## S E R M O N XIV.

The Efficacy of Prayer, for obtaining the Holy Spirit.



LUKE xi. 13.

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

**O**UR blessed Lord, having here taught his Disciples to pray, and prescribed a Form of Prayer to them, encourages them to put it constantly in Practice, SERM.  
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and to be instant and pressing in their Prayers, not doubting of Success in the End, not doubting of such a gracious Return to these their pious Importunities, as would more effectually answer their Needs, and satisfy the Ardour of their Desires, than any earthly Blessing whatsoever. For God has special and spiritual Gifts in Store for those that he esteems worthy of his Favour, that do as far excel any Good that this Earth can yield, as the infinite Benignity and Goodness of him that is the *Father of all Mercies*, exceeds the partial Love and Affection of a natural Parent. And this Encouragement we may always take along with us when we address God in Prayer: For the Argument of the Text is supported with sufficient Reason and Authority, *If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Where by the *Holy Spirit*, we must without all question understand those spiritual Gifts, that are the immediate Effects of the *Holy Ghost*, either outwardly manifesting itself, or inwardly and secretly working in the Hearts of Men.

And



*for obtaining the Holy Spirit.*

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And these Gifts of the *Holy Spirit*, are either extraordinary and temporary, or ordinary and perpetual. SERM.  
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The extraordinary and temporary Gifts were those supernatural Powers that were first, (as upon <sup>a</sup> this Day) imparted to the *Apostles*, by the visible Descent and plentiful Effusion of the *Holy Ghost*, and by them communicated to others. Such were the Gift of Tongues, of Prophecy, of Miracles, and whatever else was then more especially necessary for the Discharge of the *Apostolical Office*, and the successful Propagation of the Gospel. But after the Gospel was once well fixed and rooted, and a standing Ministry settled in the Church; these extraordinary Helps were gradually withdrawn as the Necessity of them abated.

The ordinary and perpetual Gifts of the *Holy Spirit* are those heavenly Aids and Influences, which are necessary at all Times, and to all *Christians*, in order to the enlightening their Understandings, the regulating their Wills and Affections, the sanctifying their Souls and Bodies to the Service of

<sup>a</sup> *Whitsunday.*

Z 4

God,

SERM. and to be instant and pressing in their Prayers,  
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 doubting of such a gracious Return to these  
 their pious Importunities, as would more effectually answer their Needs, and satisfy the Ardour of their Desires, than any earthly Blessing whatsoever. For God has special and spiritual Gifts in Store for those that he esteems worthy of his Favour, that do as far excel any Good that this Earth can yield, as the infinite Benignity and Goodness of him that is the *Father of all Mercies*, exceeds the partial Love and Affection of a natural Parent. And this Encouragement we may always take along with us when we address God in Prayer: For the Argument of the Text is supported with sufficient Reason and Authority, *If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Where by the *Holy Spirit*, we must without all question understand those spiritual Gifts, that are the immediate Effects of the *Holy Ghost*, either outwardly manifesting itself, or inwardly and secretly working in the Hearts of Men.

And

*for obtaining the Holy Spirit.*

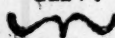
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And these Gifts of the *Holy Spirit*, are either extraordinary and temporary, or ordinary and perpetual. SERM.  
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The extraordinary and temporary Gifts were those supernatural Powers that were first, (as upon <sup>a</sup> this Day) imparted to the *Apostles*, by the visible Descent and plentiful Effusion of the *Holy Ghost*, and by them communicated to others. Such were the Gift of Tongues, of Prophecy, of Miracles, and whatever else was then more especially necessary for the Discharge of the *Apostolical Office*, and the successful Propagation of the Gospel. But after the Gospel was once well fixed and rooted, and a standing Ministry settled in the Church; these extraordinary Helps were gradually withdrawn as the Necessity of them abated.

The ordinary and perpetual Gifts of the *Holy Spirit* are those heavenly Aids and Influences, which are necessary at all Times, and to all *Christians*, in order to the enlightening their Understandings, the regulating their Wills and Affections, the sanctifying their Souls and Bodies to the Service of

<sup>a</sup> *Whitsunday.*



God, the confirming their Resolutions, the directing their Actions, the quickening their Devotions, the supporting their Spirits with inward Peace and Comfort, the elevating their Hopes with the Prospect of an everlasting Inheritance, and the conducting them through all the Paths of Virtue and Holiness, to *celestial* Happiness and Glory.

And all these Motions or Operations of the *Holy Spirit* howsoever they may work their Effect upon the Mind of Man, are comprehended under one general Name, and are by *Divines* called *Grace*. And *Grace*, to speak in Sum, is a supernatural Gift of the *Spirit of God*, necessary to make all the Means of Salvation effectual to that End.

And when we are emboldened, as in the Text, to pray unto God, and in Answer to our Prayers, to expect the Direction of his Holy Spirit; we are in Strictness to understand it, not of any extraordinary Gift, which is not now so needful, but of God's ordinary Grace, which is generally necessary both to our Sanctification and Salvation, and ought for that Reason to be constantly prayed for.

And therefore I shall hence take Occasion to discourse,

*First,*



*First*, Of the Possibility of our being supernaturally assisted by the Grace of God's Holy Spirit.

*Secondly*, Of the Necessity of this supernatural Assistance in our present Condition.

*Thirdly*, Of its Energy and Power where it is afforded.

*Fourthly*, Of the Grounds we have to hope and assure ourselves that God will grant it to us if we be duly qualified for it. And

*Fifthly*, Of the proper Method of applying to God for it, and the surest Means of obtaining it.

*First*, I begin with the first, *viz.* the Possibility of our being supernaturally assisted by the Grace of God's Holy Spirit.

But here one would think, there can scarce be Room so much as for the Question. For it must be agreed that all Things are possible with God, except it be such as imply a Contradiction, or argue some Imperfection; and consequently either incapable of being effected by any Power, or else unworthy and unfit to be the Subjects of a Divine Power. But no Man will presume to say that it implies

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plies a Contradiction, that *the Spirit of God* should act immediately upon the *Spirit of Man*. It is so far from carrying the Face of a Contradiction, that nothing indeed can appear more probable or reasonable, than that *the God of the Spirits of all Flesh*, he that gave them that perceptive Nature which they have, should communicate intimately with them, and fit them for this Communication, and make them particularly capable of receiving his blessed Influences, as he was pleased to frame them after his own Image and Similitude. Nor can this be thought a Work unworthy of God: for doubtless it well beseems our great and good Creator, who originally endowed human Souls with Understanding and Will, and other inferior Faculties, to assist and direct them in the Use and Exercise of these their natural Faculties: and again to rectify the Abuse of these Faculties, and to repair the Imperfections and Decays of lapsed Nature, by the supernatural Supplies of his own *gracious Spirit*.

So that whilst we are enquiring after the Possibility, we must in Effect be convinced of the Reasonableness and Probability of that  
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supernatural Assistance which we are speaking of. And indeed no Man can entertain any Doubt of either the Possibility or Probability, but who is much more exalted upon the conceited Strength of his natural Reason, than he is humble by any real Sense of his natural Weakness and Ignorance. It is true the Manner of this internal Operation of the *Spirit of God*, is not perhaps so easy to be accounted for; but it is no good Argument to say, it is inexplicable and therefore it is impossible. And of a *Christian* sure he must be a very slow *Believer*, and a more unapt Scholar than *Nicodemus* the *Jew*, who can still puzzle himself with the Question, that has long since received a sufficient Answer. *How can a Man be born when he is old, or become a new Creature?* For so it may be though he knows not how; and as nice an Examiner as he is, he is forced to yield his Assent even in the common *Phænomena* of Nature, to Things that appear very unaccountable. *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the Sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit,* (*John* iii. 8.) the rising and ceasing of Winds

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is owing to some hidden Cause that we are unacquainted with, but yet no Man was ever *Sceptick* enough to raise a Doubt, whether the *Wind* does really *blow* or no, when he both hears it and feels it. And tho' it be never so difficult to conceive how the Grace of God operates upon the Mind of Man, how it enlightens the Understanding without dazzling, and bends the Will without forcing, how it inspires new Thoughts, Affections, and Inclinations, I say tho' this be never so difficult to conceive, yet it is no Prejudice against the Possibility of the Thing, provided there be (as there are) convincing Reasons enough to satisfy that so it is and must be. Since therefore there is no colourable Exception to the Possibility of the supernatural Assistance of God's Grace, let us proceed to consider

*Secondly*, The Necessity of it in our present Condition. And in Truth the Exigency of our Condition is such, that we can hardly be so vain as to think (tho' the Scriptures were silent in the Matter) that we are of ourselves sufficient for any Thing, or that *we have any Sufficiency but of God.* For, as every



every Man's Experience is his own Witness, we are all extremely frail and weak, and our whole Frame and Constitution is strangely maimed and bruised. Our Minds are miserably darkened with Ignorance, and bewildered in Error, but above all Things very dull in conceiving and backward in believing Things spiritual and divine. Our Wills are crooked and depraved, perversely turning away from what is good, and leaning violently towards that which is evil. Our Affections are wild and irregular, and broke loose from the Restraint of Reason and Discretion. And since Nature is so much weakened, and so universally distempered; it is plain that we stand in Need of Succour and Relief, from a Power superior to that of Nature, which is that of divine Grace. For that meer Nature even with all the Helps and Improvements of Art, is not able to relieve its own Infirmities, nor resume its primitive Vigour, is but too apparent, whenever it is put upon the Trial. My Meaning is, that we are not able by our own natural Strength, to maintain a constant Course of Virtue, nor to discharge our Duty faithfully in any Point, if there be but any Difficulty to encounter.

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ny, and too obvious to be overlooked ; and they are such as do most evidently shew, that Nature however prop'd up by any natural or artificial Helps, is too lame to carry us thorough.

For Example, *Faith*, the Apostle tells us, is *the Gift of God*, [*Ephes. ii. 8.*] And it is certainly so in the very Act as well as the Object : That is, it requires an internal Illumination of the Soul to prepare us for the Reception of a divine Truth, as well as an external Revelation to propose it to our Belief. Which is abundantly confirmed by the unreasonable Perverseness of some Men, who pretend to much Exactness in examining and weighing the Reason and Evidence of Things, and yet these very Men, whilst they are ready enough to give Credit to any reputable Historian, are too scrupulous to believe the History of the Gospel, which is supported with better Evidence than any profane History whatsoever. An undeniable Argument that there is something more required to make Man a Believer, than his own natural Sagacity, or the meer moral Evidence of the Thing.

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Thus again, suppose a Man seriously to believe a Heaven and Hell, and the infinite Happiness of the one and the Misery of the other; and suppose the same Man, in all other Cases, to be well able to judge of the Moment of Things, and particularly well versed in computing Loss and Gain, and balancing the Hazard of any Enterprize with the Advantage of it; yet this very Man shall risque the Loss of eternal Happiness, and incur the Danger of eternal Misery for every earthly Trifle. Which amounts to a plain Proof, that how agreeable soever Virtue may be to Nature and Reason, Nature and Reason are not of themselves sufficient to determine a Man to be virtuous; that Determination must be derived from some higher and more powerful Principle, which is the Grace of God. Once more, suppose a Man to have had the Benefit of a religious Education, and the pious Example of Parents and Instructors, besides the Advantage of good natural Sense, and a towardly Disposition of his own, yet there want not Examples even of such Men as this, that have on the sudden made a shameful Revolt from Virtue, and run into all the mad Extravagances of Vice imaginable.

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Which may serve for a Demonstration that distempered Nature, even when it seems to be most orderly, still wants a Keeper; and that there is absolute Need of a restraining Grace, to contain those that are best disposed within the regular Bounds of their Duty.

And these Instances may suffice to make it undeniably clear that we do stand in Need of the supernatural Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, in Order to be uniformly good and virtuous.

It must be confessed indeed that the *Heathens*, some of them at least, were not so clear in this Point; for *Tully* was once so unadvised as to say that Men do not pray to God to make them just, temperate or wise; he could apprehend it seems no Necessity of so doing; because he looked upon these as the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as the *Stoicks* called them, the Things that are absolutely in our own Power. But a slender Acquaintance with himself or any of the *arrogant Philosophers* he conversed with, might have helped to convince him that a great Pretender is one Thing, and a good Practicer another. And though *Horace*, who was no great *Bigot*



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his Way, thought it enough to pray to *Jove*, for Life and a Livelihood, as being able to furnish himself with an even and contented Mind to enjoy it, yet Experience testifies, that Contentment is not so necessary an Appendant to an easy Fortune, nor so cheap a Purchase as he might think it. For we find that many who rowl in Plenty, and shine in Honour, are as much Strangers to Contentment as any of their meaner Neighbours. And in Truth, Contentment is a Gift as well as an Art. And when *St. Paul* tells us (*Philip. iv. 11.*) *I have learned in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content*, he acquaints us at once who his Teacher and his Helper was, for he adds, (*ver. 13.*) *I can do all Things thro' Christ, which strengtheneth me.* And as the highest and the hardest Pitch of Virtue is attainable thro' his Help, so we cannot acquire or maintain the least Degree of it, without his gracious Concurrence, who is the original Author of it: For it is his divine Power that hath given us all Things, that pertain to Life and Godliness, [*2 Pet. i. 3.*] and without him we can do nothing, as he himself expressly assures, [*John xv. 5.*] And so much of the Necessity of the superna-

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*Thirdly,* To consider its Energy and Power when it is afforded to us. And there is no Question to be made, but that the Effect it produces is every Way worthy of so noble a Cause. And we have Examples upon Record of prodigious Changes that have been wrought in the Hearts and Lives of Men, by the Efficacy of God's Grace, abundantly shed on them thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour.

This was more especially remarkable in the first Ages of *Christianity*, when the Converts to the Faith of Christ were transformed on the sudden into new Men, and were restored from the very Sink of all Impiety and Impunity, to the Practice of Sobriety and Virtue, and a Conversation that was strictly religious and irreproachable. And so far transported were they with the Love of Christ, and possessed of the Truth and Excellency of the Religion they had embraced, that they contemned all the Allurements of this present World, and even Life itself, and courted the very Flames, and triumphed in all Manner of Torments and Deaths, for *the Testimony of*  
*Jesus.*

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*Jesus.* And this, as the antient *Apologists* observe, was manifestly a Power supernatural and divine, that could mould Men by Nature and Custom most confirmed and obstinate Sinners, into a quite different Frame of Spirit and Manner of Behaviour; and that could animate them whose Age or Sex had made them tender and timorous, and whose Education perhaps had been but too soft and delicate, undauntedly to undergo the extremest of all Cruelties, in the Cause of God and their Religion. And without all peradventure, the Efficacy of God's Grace is still the same, as powerful, as wonderful as ever, though it does not ordinarily manifest itself, now *Christianity* is in peaceable Possession, by such sharp and terrible Trials; and tho' the strange Abatement of *Christian Zeal* and Love, in this degenerate Age, may in some Measure quench the sacred Flame, or obscure its Brightness and Glory. But yet I say, God be thanked, even modern Examples are not wanting that do sufficiently magnify the Power of divine Grace. Such among others, I take to be that inward but mighty Support that has sustained the Spirits of some Men with incredible Patience, and perfect

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Resignation, nay and some Degree of Alacrity too, under the greatest bodily Infirmities, and the most painful as well as lingering Diseases. And tho' the Operation of the Holy Spirit is internal and insensible, and not always obvious to our Notice, yet I make no Doubt but it has its constant Effect upon the Souls of Men even in ordinary Cases, and is still either secretly whispering to our Understandings, or gently inclining our Wills, or moderating our Affections, either restraining us from evil, or exciting us to good, ever accompanying us, and moving silently along with us, and either beginning, promoting or finishing some good Work in us. And tho', as I said, these kind of Impressions are not always obvious to our Notice, yet it is not hard to trace them in some particular Instances. As now, if we should suppose two several Persons, both of good natural Sense and Parts, but of wicked and profligate Lives, reduced to the Point of Death, and upon that frightful Prospect, to have their Consciences awakened, and touched with a real Conviction of their manifold Sins, and upon this to form deliberate Resolutions to forsake them if it shall please God to restore



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store them. And supposing after this, that they should both recover, yet it may so happen (as it often has) that one of the two shall indeed become a new Man, and lead quite another Course of Life than formerly he did, but the other after a while shall break through all his good Purposes of Amendment, and relapse into the same lewd Way of living that he had been accustomed to. And what is the Reason of this Difference? Their Capacities are supposed to be equal, their Conviction equal, their Resolutions equal; they were both no doubt in earnest when they resolved to amend; and hitherto therefore they both alike complied with the Motions of the Blessed Spirit, stirring them up to Repentance. But then when they came upon a fresh Trial, the one ceased any further to co-operate with God's Grace, that had conducted him thus far, nor did he keep sufficiently upon his Guard, and therefore he soon gave in to the *Temptation*, that was next ready to beset him: Whereas the other, it is to be presumed, continued to employ his best Endeavours in Compliance with that Measure of Grace he had, and to sue to Heaven for further Succour; and thus being *strengthened with Might in the*

SERM. *inner Man, he was enabled to stand against*  
 XIV. *the Wiles of the Devil, [Ephes. iii. 16. vi. 11.]*

This seems to me the best Account that can be given of the different Behaviour of two Men, (otherwise supposed to be in equal Circumstances.) And this may serve to shew that the Grace of God has its positive and constant Effect even in common Cases, tho' it does not act with an irresistible Force upon the Minds of Men. It moves sometimes where it finds but little Compliance, where it is complied with, it is still advancing, where it is neglected it retires, where it is resisted it relinquishes, but where it is cordially embraced and diligently improved, there it sheds forth itself in great Abundance, and is sure to carry on its Work to Perfection. Hitherto of the Energy and Power of divine Grace, when it is afforded to us. Proceed we

*Fourthly,* To examine the Grounds we have to hope and assure ourselves that God will grant it to us, if we be duly qualified for it. And the primary Reason upon which this Hope is founded, must be resolved into the Benignity and Goodness of God, and the provident Care that he hath of the Children of

of Men. And this Reason is plainly couch'd in the very Text. *If ye then, being Evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall God give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* That is, if the natural Affection and common Prudence of Parents, tho' they may happen to be too niggardly and tenacious, will yet generally both prompt and direct them to make Provision for their Children as is most needful and convenient for them; much more sure will God who is infinitely wise, as well as inexhaustibly good, and who both knows and pities all our Necessities, furnish us his Sons and Servants with the best good Thing of all others, and which is most absolutely necessary to our everlasting Welfare, that is, the Gift of his Holy Spirit.

And as upon this very Ground we have Reason sufficient to hope for it, so this Hope is farther confirmed to us by many comfortable Promises. Such in particular is that of Ezekiel, (xxxvi. 26, 27.) *A new Heart also will I give, and a new Spirit will I put within you. And I will take away the stony Heart out of your Flesh, and give you a Heart of Flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you;*

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*and cause you to walk in my Statutes ; and ye shall keep my Judgments, and do them.* Such again is that of *Jeremiah* [xxxi. 33, &c.] *I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts. They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest.* These are plain Preshignifications of that plentiful Communication that the Church of God was to be blest with, under the Gospel Dispensation. And to us that live under that gracious Dispensation, St. *James* gives this fresh Assurance, (i. 5.) *If any Man lack Wisdom, (or by Parity of Reason any other spiritual Gift) let him ask of God, who giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him.* And it was our Saviour's own compassionate Promise a little before his Departure, that he *would not leave his Disciples comfortless, but send another Comforter to abide with them, and all Christians after them for ever* [*John* xiv. 16, 18.] Nor do we rest upon Promises alone, tho' they are abundantly satisfactory, but we have the very Substance of these Promises in whom they are all *Yea, and Amen*, even *Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased.* And he that spared not his own Son, but



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but delivered him up for us all, *how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things,* [Rom. viii. 32.] and I may add above all other Things, the freest Largess of his Holy Spirit, since that perpetual Fountain of Grace and Merit was opened in his Son's most precious Side, the derivative Conveyance of which he himself has taken especial Care of by establishing a Church, and selecting an Order of Men for the *perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying the Body of Christ*, by the Revelation of his Word, by the Institution of his Sacraments, *Baptism* as the very *washing of Regeneration*, and the *Lord's Supper*, for the Renewal of the Vows in Baptism made, and the reviving and improving the Grace therein conferred; and lastly, by all other external Means, that are any wise subservient to the Spirit in its internal Operations. Having therefore such abundant Assurance that God will grant us his Grace, and effectually convey it to us, if we be duly qualified for it, it remains only to be considered,

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*Fifthly*, In the fifth and last Place, what is the proper Method of applying to God for it,

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it, and the surest Way to obtain it. Now the most immediate Recourse that we can have to God for his divine Assistance in the Discharge of our Duty, is Prayer, seconded by our own hearty and sincere Endeavour.

And it is such a natural Way of Application this, that the wiser *Heathens* were sensible of it, and practised it accordingly. *Simplicius* thought it needful to pray to God to co-operate with us in such a Manner, as is suitable to free Agents. And *Hierocles* expressly says, that Prayer is the middle Term between our seeking and God's giving, whereby we adhere to our Maker, who as he first gave us our being, so can alone perfect it. And to this he adds, that we must not so undertake what is excellent, as if we could go through it with our own single Strength, without the Assistance of God; nor on the other Side so satisfy ourselves with bare praying, as not to join any Endeavour of our own towards the Attainment of the Thing we pray for. For so, either our Virtue will be without God, (if it be possible to suppose such a Thing) or else our Prayer without Activity; the first of which takes away the Nature of Virtue, the latter the Efficacy of Prayer.

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Prayer. (For how can that be good, which is not done according to the divine Law?

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And how can that which is so done, not stand in Need of the Co-operation of God whereby to subsist? For Virtue is nothing else but the Image of God upon the rational Soul. Now every Image wants the *Prototype* to support its Subsistence: and in vain do you endeavour to possess yourself of Virtue, if you refer it not to him, for the Sake of whose Likeness you study to acquire it.) Thus far that learned *Heathen*. But we have better Authority to direct us. For this is the very Method that the Scripture prescribes; and this we find has always been the Practice of those that have been best acquainted with God's Will and their own Duty. Thus the holy *Psalmist* was wont to pray, that God would *open his Eyes*, [cxix. 18.] and *incline his Heart*, [cxix. 36.] *that he would lead him in the Way of Righteousness*, [Psalm v. 8.] *that he would create a clear Heart, and renew a right Spirit within him*. [Psalm li. 10.] And to shew that his Practice was consonant to his Prayers, he often professes that *the Law of God was his Meditation, his Study, his Delight, a Lamp to his Feet, and a Lantern*  
to

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*to his Paths, that is, the Rule and Guide of all his Actions. And St. Paul we may observe frequently prays for his Converts as well as himself, that the God of all Grace would perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them, and finish the good Work begun in them; and yet, tho' it is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good Pleasure, yet he exhorteth, to work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling, [Phil. ii. 12.] plainly intimating, that though God is the principal Mover, yet he does not allow us to be wholly passive, he requires our joint Endeavours, which through his Blessing shall be effectual.*

*In Brief, this is St. James's Direction, If any Man lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him. [James i. 5.] And this is our Saviour's Doctrine in the Text. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit? but to whom, to them that ask him? To them that ample Promise belongs, ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you, [Mat. vii. 7.] Which as it gives us a very comfortable and absolute Assurance indeed of Success in our Prayers, when we pray for spiritual Gifts and Graces, so it shews*

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us how such our Prayers ought to be qualified, in order to make them certainly effectual. They ought to be put up with much Ardour, and Assiduity, and Importunity, and an earnest Pursuit after the good Things we stand in Need of. For though Grace be the *free Gift of God*, yet is it to be obtained by our humble Application, and it is improveable by our Industry, and in some Sort like other Habits too, it is confirmed and strengthened by Use and Exercise, and stifled and lost through Neglect and Disuse. In short, therefore, we must pray earnestly and fervently for the Grace of God's Holy Spirit, and endeavour heartily and sincerely to be virtuous; and so praying we shall certainly obtain a suitable Assistance, so endeavouring we shall be enabled to perform an acceptable and due Obedience.

Give me leave now only to make an Observation or two from what has been said, and I shall conclude. And first

It may be observed to our great Encouragement, that the Duty of a *Christian* is by no Means impracticable. And in this Sense as well as others the *Holy Ghost* is our *Comforter*. Indeed, if we were only to consider the strict  
Obligation

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Obligation that lies upon us *to walk worthy of God unto all pleasing, and to abstain from all Appearance of Evil*, and were to compare the Laboriousness and Difficulty of the Task, with the inbred Corruption of our Nature, and our many and great Infirmities, we might be tempted to sit down in Despondency, and conclude our Doom to be inevitable, because our Duty would be impossible. But since God has given us the comfortable Assurance of his gracious Spirit, to conduct us thro' all the difficultest Paths of Virtue, and to support us under the severest Trials, this ought to animate us with new Hopes, and inspire us with Courage superior to our Enemies; for *they that are with us, are more and mightier than those that are against us.*

2dly, We may observe from what has been said, how necessary it is for *Christians* to be *constant and fervent in their Prayers to God, the Author of all good Gifts.* For since we cannot perform our Duty acceptably without the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and since that is not to be obtained or expected without praying for it, if we desire sincerely to be good, we must pray affectionately that God would dispose and enable us so to be,  
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and we must continue in Prayer, and we hope to persevere in Goodness; for Prayer is the only Support of human Virtue, whose natural Weakness requires a perpetual Supply of *Spiritual Strength from above*. But whilst I am recommending Prayer as absolutely necessary to this End, I must not be thought to set aside the other subordinate Means of Grace, such as Meditation, Hearing and Reading the Word, which are all instrumental Helps, that are sanctified and made effectual by Prayer, which is our most immediate Communication with Heaven, and the Vehicle by which all Blessings are derived to us from thence.

And as all our Prayers do derive their Efficacy from the Name and Mediation of Christ, so of all others those doubtless are the most prevalent with God, that are mingled with *Eucharistical Praises*, and sent up recommended by the *commemorative Sacrifice of his most blessed Body and Blood*: For in these solemn Devotions, we do, in our Capacity, the very same Thing upon Earth, that our *everlasting High Priest*, and *powerful Intercessor* is constantly doing for us in Heaven, i. e. we humbly represent to God the Father

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the invaluable Merit, of that most *perfect Oblation once offered upon the Cross, for the Sins of Mankind*; and by this precious Death of his only beloved Son, we intreat him to grant us Pardon and Peace, and all other Benefits of his Passion. Than which, what Importunity could there be more grateful, what Plea more available with God? This *Holy Sacrament* therefore we may justly look upon as the surest Pledge and Earnest of divine Grace, and the Conduit through which it most freely and plentifully flows. Which when we approach it with due Preparation of Soul, we piously expect to have our Faith at once exercised and increased, our Hope, enlivened and elevated, our Love enflamed and purified, all our spiritual Wants supplied, and all our Virtues improved, till at Length *proceeding from Grace to Grace*, we arrive at a consummate Perfection of Bliss and Glory, and *dwell in Christ, and Christ in us*, inseparable for ever.

Now to God the Father, &c.

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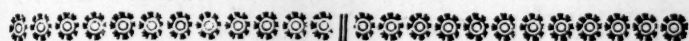
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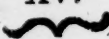
Of the Wisdom that is from above.



JAMES iii. 17.

*But the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable; gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, without Hypocrisy.*

**T**HE Author of this Epistle among other useful Admonitions, industriously opposes some of those erroneous Tenets and vicious Practices which Simon the Arch-Heretick, and such as spawned

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ed from him, (united at length under the common Name of *Gnosticks*) had endeavoured to infect the Flock of Christ with.

And these Men, though they vainly pretended to a deeper Insight in the Knowledge of divine Mysteries than others, yet by their Sensuality and Impurity, their uncharitable and censorious Temper, their supercilious and contentious Behaviour, they betrayed themselves to be either grossly ignorant of the plainest Duties of *Christianity*, or rather to be vile Dissemblers, and hypocritical Professors of the *Christian Religion*.

St. *James* therefore brings them directly to the Test in the 13th and 14th Verses. *Who* (says He) *is a wise Man, and endued with Knowledge among you? Let him shew, (He that is truly so, laying aside all other Ostentation) let him shew out of a good Conversation, his Works with Meekness of Wisdom; But, if ye have bitter Envy and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth.* For these are not the true Marks of that wonderful Proficiency and Perfection ye make boast of: *This Wisdom is not from above; It is not the Effect of God's illuminating and sanctifying Grace; but it*

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is earthly, sensual, devilish, (Verse 15.) the Off-spring of a worldly Mind and carnal Lusts, and the Suggestion of the Devil, as ye may judge by its Effects: *For where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work.* SERM. XV.

And then it follows in the Words of my Text, (in Opposition to this false and counterfeit *Wisdom*) *But the Wisdom that is from above, &c.* This is the true *celestial Wisdom*, and these its genuine Properties, by which it is always to be distinguished: So that we have here in one View a summary Description of that religious and practical *Wisdom*, which is taught in the School of Christ.

And it is described by some of its eminent Properties, which are essential to it, and inseparable from it. And in whomsoever these Properties are to be found, it may charitably be presumed, that he is, what he professes, a *Christian* indeed, and that his Religion (in St. James's own Words i. 27.) is *pure, and undefiled before God*. But in whomsoever they are wanting, for certain, that Man's Religion is vain; He may usurp the Name of *Christian* if he will, but his Practice will give the Lye to his Profession, and mark

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XV.

him out for an *Infidel*, or an *Hypocrite*.  
 It will be well worth the While therefore to bestow a particular Consideration upon that Description of *Religious Wisdom* that is here set before us, that, by viewing it more distinctly in its several Parts, we may judge the better of the Beauty and Excellency of our holy Religion, and be at once made acquainted with our Duty, and stirred up to the Practice. And in doing this, I shall follow the Order of the Words, just as they lie, without looking out for a precise Reason why the several Properties are ranged as they are, which, as I take it, would be much more curious than useful. First then,

The first Property by which *Religious Wisdom* is here described is, that it is *pure*.

And this *Purity* may stand opposed in a two-fold Respect, either to *Carnality*, or *Hypocrisy*.

By *Carnality* we may understand, either the Love of the World in general, or an Indulgence to the Lusts of the Flesh, and the grosser Pleasures of Sense in Particular; both which do plainly defile the Man, and fill him full of earthly Cares and sensual Desires, the Satisfaction and Gratification of which,

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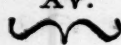
He makes his chief End and Happiness. SERM.

XV.

And the Purity which the Gospel requires in Opposition to this *Carnality*, implies a Separation of the Soul, as much as may be, from the World, and an Elevation of it unto God as the supreme Good, a virtuous Abstinence, for his Sake, from all the impure and sinful Delights of the World and the Flesh, an Abhorrence of all such Doctrines and Principles as lead to Licentiousness, a careful Avoidance of all Temptations and Allurements thereunto, and constant Endeavour to suppress those evil Thoughts that are the dangerous Fuel of our *carnal Concupiscence*.

And this is *Christian Purity* in the first Sense, obliging a Man *to purify himself as God is pure*, that is, as far as 'tis possible for a Soul, that is cloathed with Matter, and clogged with Infirmities, in Imitation of a Divine Spirit, that is absolutely pure and immaculate.

But this *Purity* may also be opposed to *Hypocrisy*; which *Hypocrisy* consists either in a demure but yet impudent Pretence to Religion, for no other End but to serve some temporal Interest, or to cloak some secret Wickedness (which is no better indeed than



a Spice of *Atheism* at the Bottom) or else in a vain but mistaken Conceit, that places the main Stress of Religion in some certain lesser Matters, (and those perhaps such as are either doubtful or indifferent) neglecting at the same Time Duties much plainer, and much weightier. And the Men that are under this Deception, may be imaginarily Religious, but they are really wicked; and the false Opinion they have of themselves, helps at once to blind their Eyes, and to harden their Hearts: For *there is a Generation* (as the wise Man characterizes them, Proverbs xxx. 12.) *that are pure in their own Eyes, and yet is not washed from their Filthiness.*

And the *Christian Purity* that is opposite to this *Hypocrisy* implies a Simplicity of Heart, and a Sincerity of Intention, aiming more to be truly good, than to be thought so; and a disinterested Zeal, entirely devoted to the Service of God, and uniformly disposed to obey Him in all Things; and an universal Care to *have always a Conscience void of Offence, both towards God and towards Men.*

And this is that *Purity* which renders a *Christian* like Himself, an honest single heart-  
ed

ed Man, in his Profession and Practice entirely the same, without *halting* or *doubting*. SERM.  
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And that this Purity both in Conversation and Intention, is an essential Property of the *Wisdom that is from above*, of that Religion which is instituted of God, and approved by Him, is evident enough both from the Nature and Attributes of God, and from the Declaration of his Will. From his Nature and Attributes, because He is a Being of perfect and unspotted Holiness, and of *purser Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, with any the least Approbation, and at the same Time, his Eyes are as piercing, as they are pure; He *searcheth the Heart and trieth the Reins*; The very Inwards of a Man are laid *naked and open* before Him; so that no outward Shew can ever deceive Him, nor secret Corruption escape Him. And accordingly the Scripture insists upon *Purity of Heart and Life*, as the best Qualifications we can bring along with us, to recommend us to God's Favour. It informs us, that he desires *Truth in the inward Parts*, that the *pure in Heart* are they who (as being best fitted for it) shall be peculiarly blest with the ravishing

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SERM. ing Sight of Himself. Saint *James* in Parti-  
 XV. cular, (iv. 8.) prescribes it as a necessary  
 Preparation, in Order to approach God in  
 the most acceptable Manner. *Draw nigh  
 to God* (says he) *and he will draw nigh to  
 you: Cleanse your Hands, ye Sinners, and pu-  
 rify your Hearts, ye double minded.*

*Secondly*, The second distinguishing Pro-  
 perty of that *Religious Wisdom* here describ-  
 ed is, that it is *peaceable*; first *pure*, then  
*peaceable*, in Opposition to Contentiousness,  
 which is a perverse Temper of Mind, equal-  
 ly uneasy to itself, and troublesome to others:  
 industrious to seek, or, at least, apt to take  
 hold of any Occasion of quarrelling; and  
 thereby disturbing the Quiet of Families and  
 Neighbourhoods: And, when it is in Com-  
 bination with others of the like unhappy  
 Disposition with itself, interrupting the pub-  
 lick Tranquillity and good Order either of  
 Church or State.

Now the healing Opposite, or Antidote  
 to this, is that *Peaceableness* which the Text  
 commends to us, which is a Composedness  
 and Sedateness of Spirit, free from all inor-  
 dinate Perturbations, or any Itch or Inclina-  
 tion

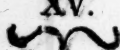


tion to be either *principal*, or *accessary* in kindling or abetting, much less in heightening and perpetuating Strife and Contention, either in private or in publick. So far from that, that it is always disposed to procure, promote and preserve Peace, to compose Differences, heal Divisions, and put a Stop to all kind of Disorders by all such Means as are lawful, prudent or practicable. So that *Peaceableness* does in Truth imply both the Habit and the Practice of all *social Virtues*, that is, of all such Virtues as are more particularly serviceable in regulating Mens mutual Conversation each with other, in all Degrees, Conditions, or Capacities; in all which you will find the *peaceable Man* still acting like himself, and always aiming at the same good End.

And, for the Purpose, his Deportment towards his Equals, you shall observe, will ever be with all Truth, Equity, Humanity, Candour, and Courtesy: Towards his Inferiors, with all Tenderneſs, Humility, and obliging Condeſcenſion: Towards his Superiors, with all decent Reſpect, and due Deference: Towards his Governors more eſpecially, with all Dutifulneſs, Submiſſion, and  
humble

SERM.

XV.



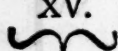
humble Acquiescence. He will not harbour a disloyal Thought in his Heart : He will not utter a reviling Word against their Persons or their Dignity : He will not set up for a pragmatical Censurer or malicious Representer of their Actions : He will not be the Inventor or the Spreader of lewd Lies and Libels : He will not be a Ringleader or a Partizan in Faction : He will not be so much as a Murmurer, or Ill-wisher against the lawful Government he lives under, but he will always do his own Duty quietly and chearfully, and encourage others to do the like : He will always regard the common Good before any lesser Ends or Interests of his own : He will always esteem the Preservation of the publick Peace to be the best Security to himself and his own particular Concerns. But above all Things, the Peace and Prosperity of God's Church is that for which he professes to have, and really has the tenderest Regard. And therefore he makes a Conscience of reverencing and obeying his *Spiritual Pastors*, as his *Parents in the Lord* : He embraces and cherishes all his fellow Members, as Brethren, with a fervent and unfeigned Love : He is not to be dis-

united

united in Affection from them through any accidental Difference in Opinion, he confines not all Honesty and Orthodoxy to any less material Point : And he is at no Time, whatever he holds, or whatever he yields, he is at no Time to be disputed out of his Charity. And yet he looks upon Unity as a very lovely and desirable Thing, and causeless Separation as a very dangerous Sin, and both a Blemish, and a Detriment to our common *Christianity* ; and therefore he will not rashly deprive himself of so valuable a Privilege as the Communion of the Church, where it may be had : He will not be a *Separatist* himself ; nor will he sooth those that are so : He will not betray the Truth, undermine the Peace of the Church, and perpetuate Schism, by any mistaken Excess of Charity, or undue Compliances, though he will *shew all Meekness unto all Men*, even to those that oppose themselves, if peradventure, by that softer Method they may be reduced and reconciled, and God will give them Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth.

Such is the blessed Disposition of the *peaceable* Man, and such will his whole Conduct  
and

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and Behaviour be ; and he makes it no small Point of his Religion. And not without Reason certainly : For God himself is stiled the *God of Peace*, as being the Author and the Lover of it : and Peace again is ascribed to *Him* ; it is called *the Peace of God*, as being the gracious Effect of his good Spirit ruling in Mens Hearts : And there is an Obligation to it directly arising from our Vocation as *Christians*, and *Members of Christ's mystical Body the Church* : For even hereunto were we called, to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. [*Ephes. iv. 3.*] It is a Duty expressly enjoined, and much insisted on by our Saviour, that we should have Peace one with another. And it is earnestly inculcated by his Apostles, that, *if possible, we should live peaceably with all Men* [*Romans xii. 18.*] And lastly it is a Duty with a peculiar Beatitude annexed to it, *Blessed* (says He that was himself a *Peace-Maker* between God and us, [*Mat. v. 9.*] ) are the *Peace-makers* ; for they shall be called the *Children of God*. And it shall not miss of its Reward : For the Fruit of Righteousness (the Verse after my Text tells us) is sown in Peace, (and doubtless shall be reaped in Glory) of them that make Peace. So



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So that *Peaceableness* has a very good Title SERM.  
XV. to be reckoned (as it is in the Text) for one eminent Property of Religion.

*Thirdly*, The next Property of this true *Celestial Wisdom* is, that it is *gentle* and (which for Affinity-sake is joined with it) *easy to be intreated*.

Now the Word which is translated *gentle* here, admits of diverse Significations in the New Testament. Sometimes it signifies meek or mild, in Opposition to an angry or revengeful Temper; and, agreeably to this Sense, *to be easy to be intreated*, will imply a Readiness, upon Intreaty, to forgive an Injury, or to be reconciled to an Enemy.

Sometimes it signifies kind or good, in Opposition to Moroseness and Ill-nature; and *easy to be intreated*, when we suit it with this Sense, must imply a Willingness and Forwardness to do good Offices, when requested to it.

Sometimes it signifies moderate, or equitable in Opposition to the Extremity or Rigor of Justice; and in Compliance with this Sense, *easy to be intreated*, supposes a Readiness to listen to Reason, and to be governed  
by

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SERM. by it, without adhering to strict Right, or  
XV. insisting upon the most rigid Terms of deciding any Matter in Question. And this last Signification, (though there is no Necessity of excluding either of the former) seems chiefly to take Place in the Text. And it recommends a Virtue to us, which as it is helpful in correcting and tempering all our Passions, so it directs and disposes us more particularly to keep the proper Mean betwixt Lenity and Severity, Levity and Obstinacy, Uncharitableness and Credulity, though always inclining to the favourable Side.

In Things that are doubtful, it makes the most candid Construction that the Case will bear, and inclines us to believe the best where there is but any Colour for it, and to hope the best still where there is but slender Reason to believe it ; nay it obliges us to keep a Reserve of Compassion and Charity for all the Infirmities of human Nature, whether proceeding from mere Weakness or from a Mixture of Willfulness ; and where the hopeful Signs of Repentance once appear, it makes us much readier to conceive a good Opinion of the Penitent than we were

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before to censure and condemn the Offender. SERM. XV.

In Matters of Difference, it always puts us in Mind to maintain a Temper and Decorum, especially in religious Controversies, in which Fierceness and Bitterness are very unfavoury Ingredients ; besides that they are too apt to make Men over-strain the Point. To prevent which, this Virtue of Equity or Moderation interposes, obliging us to see that the Question be fairly and truly stated, without loading it with unnecessary Aggravations, or denying all reasonable Concessions that make for Peace, and consist with Truth ; to allow our Adversaries their Integrity (unless there be flagrant Signs to the contrary) though we cannot indulge them in their Mistakes ; to shew all Tenderness to their Persons and good Name, though none to their Errors ; and however *zealous we may be in a good Cause*, not to make our *Zeal* for it the chief Argument of its Goodness, not to pursue that stiffly and pertinaciously, that we have happened to take up unwarily, or perhaps groundlessly ; but wheresoever we detect an Error, even in ourselves, or Friends, to rejoice at the Discovery, and yield it up ingeniously,

nuously, preferring a good Conscience before a little Reputation, and Truth before Triumph.

And again in Matters of *Meum* and *Tuum*, of Right and Wrong. This Virtue will direct us, to part with some lesser Convenience that may be spared, for the more valuable Purchase of Peace and Amity, not rigorously to insist upon a Privilege or a Due, which perhaps may be but inconsiderable to ourselves, and yet oppressive and burthensome to our Neighbours; not to take Fire at every little Injury, and to prosecute it with Rage and Fury; but to compose ourselves to bear, and forbear all that is possible, and to forgive, if we can have (where the Cause requires it) but any tolerable Compensation; and if that is not to be had, to accept of the Trespasser's Submission and Repentance, that so at least Enmity may cease, and make Way for Reconciliation.

And thus will he that is *gentle*, and *easy to be intreated*, acquit himself, *shewing all Meekness unto all Men*, and in all Cases that will admit of it. And he is sufficiently sensible of his Obligation so to do, in Imitation of, and in Gratitude to that God, *who is*



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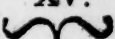
gracious and merciful, slow to Anger and of great Kindness, who is not extreme to mark what Sinners do amiss, nor to reward them exactly according to their Iniquities, but has afforded a Relief from the Rigour of the Law, in the Equity of his blessed Gospel. And accordingly you will find, that no one Duty is expressed in the New-Testament with more Frequency, or more Vehemency than this: an Example of which you have in the 4th to the *Ephesians*, ver. 1, 2. *I therefore the Prisoner of the Lord beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love.* And again (*Coloss.* iii. 12, 13.) *Put on therefore, (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* And this same Gentleness is also reckoned as one of the Fruits of the Spirit, in the 5th to the *Galatians*, and therefore it is fitly ranked here by *St. James* among the Properties of that *Wisdom that is from above.*

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*Fourthly*, The fourth Property of it is, that it is *full of Mercy, and good Fruits*. By the first of which [*Mercy*] we are to understand the Disposition or Habit of Commiseration towards the Distrest, or of Charitableness in any kind, towards those that may stand in need of it. By the latter, that is, *good Fruits*, we are to understand the actual Exercise of that Habit, consisting in all the several Works of Charity which grow as the Fruits upon this Stock, such as are *feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, visiting the Fatherless, and the Widow in their Affliction, comforting the Disconsolate*; and numberless Instances besides.

For indeed the Virtue or Grace of *Charity* is of so diffusive and comprehensive a Nature, that it branches itself into all the Parts of human Life, and endeavours to answer and provide for all the Necessities, and Capacities, the Conveniencies and Advantages of Mankind. Wherever there is any Defect to be supplied, or Evil to be removed; wherever there is any Benefit to be conferred, or Improvement to be made, there Charity presently exerts itself, and chearfully lends its Assistance, and is still acting within its proper Province; for the  
Objects

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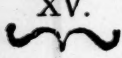
Objects or Persons to which it extends its kindly Influence, are no more confined than SERM.  
XV. are the various Methods of conveying it. 

And that this also is one genuine Property, and main Branch of *true Religion*, is too plain to be made a Doubt of. For as it is *the first and great Commandment that we should love God, with all our Heart, and with all our Strength, so the second is like unto it, that we should love our Neighbours as our selves* (Mat. xxii. 37, 38, 39.) And *to do good*, which is the perpetual Effect of this Love, is to copy after the divine Pattern in that most amiable Perfection of infinite Goodness, and Beneficence. And it is therefore peculiarly acceptable unto God, it is the *sweet smelling Sacrifice, with which he is always well pleased*. It is in a Word, the Virtue to which he has promised his special Benediction here, and a most ample Recompence hereafter. And it is accordingly enjoined by the very particular, and often reiterated Commands, of our Blessed Saviour, it is recommended to us by his unparalleled Example. And it is most pathetically enforced in all the Apostolical Writings from these and such like Considerations.

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 *Fifthly and lastly*, It is subjoined as another Property of that *Wisdom* (or perhaps rather as a Qualification of the foregoing) that it *be without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy.*

And this may be understood either with a Reference to all that went before; and then it plainly implies, that Integrity and Sincerity of Obedience which is due to all God's Commandments without Exception, in Opposition to those who betray the Falseness of their own Hearts, and the Vanity of their affected Pretences to Religion, by *picking and culling* in Matters of known Duty; lamely observing some without any hearty Compliance, and as grossly neglecting others without any Manner of Conscience.

But I think it is more probably to be understood with Relation to the last mentioned Particular, that is, the Duty of *Charity*, and the conscionable and laudable Exercise thereof, which to be sure ought always to be *without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy.*

But we are not yet clearly let into the Meaning of this Expression, because the Word *ἀδιάντιστος* is capable of diverse Significations,  
and



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and not so certainly to be determined to one, because it is not to be met with again in the New Testament. SERM.  
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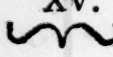
It is in the Margin rendred *without wrangling*, as if it were opposed to that Itch of Contention which is indeed incompatible with Charity, but not needful to be obviated again here, because 'tis more directly contrary to the *Peaceableness* before-mentioned.

Some would have it rendered *without judging*, as if it were opposed to the *Hypocrite's* Delight, the Practice, I mean, of *rash judging* and *censuring*, which is also a notorious Breach of Charity; which were no disagreeable Sense.

Some are for rendering it without *judging* or *wavering*, as if it were opposed to Inconstancy in Religion, or rather to that Doubtfulness of Mind, which makes Men afraid (especially in dubious Times) of trusting Providence for the Returns of their Charity.

But in my Opinion, the common rendering is the most easy and agreeable of any; [*without Partiality*] that is, without any partial Difference made between Person and Person, that should confine our Charity to some of one certain *Stamp*, and exclude all

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XV.  others from the least Participation with them. And if we may judge of the Manners of ancient Times by our own present Practice, there was need enough of cautioning against that narrow spirited Temper that is so apt to mislead *Charity* itself into by-Ways, and govern it wholly by by-Respects. For if ye observe it (and ye cannot but observe it) as the World now goes, he that is of my Opinion, of my Way or Party, (though it be but in secular Matters) he is *honest*, he is *stanch*, he is *orthodox*, he is the *best Christian*, in short he is every Thing that deserves to be encouraged. But if he is not of *my Cast*, he has *ipso facto* forfeited both his *Judgment* and *Integrity*. He is all the ill Things, and ill Names that can be thought of; he has hardly any Title left even to common *Charity*. A very uncharitable and unjust Way of proceeding sure, that thus goes about to enclose that, which is, or should be common.

An indifferent *by-Stander* would rather think, that 'tis possible for a Man to have *Honesty* and *Merit* too, though he is not in all Points of the same Sentiments with me :

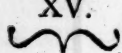
And

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And any one that thinks impartially, would rather conclude that whatever the Demerits of any *Individual* may be, that human Nature will always deserve to be well dealt by; and that all Men (as such) are the natural Objects of each other's mutual Benevolence and Good-will.

And indeed such partial Discrimination and Respect of Persons, destroys the very Nature of *Charity*. For it is the Nature of *Charity* to be universal and unconfined. The *Jew*, the *Samaritan*, the *Turk*, the *Infidel* are all (in the Gospel-sense) *Neighbours* to the *Christian*, and should be treated by him as such, whereinfoever he is capable of doing them any Kindness, or they of receiving any from him: And much nearer should one *Christian* be to another; for they are linked together by much closer and more endearing Ties. But, to be sure, whoever is not charitable to all Men to his Power, as Occasion shall present, or need require, it may justly be questioned, whether he be charitable to any upon a true *Christian Principle*: For he that is *partial* in his *Charity*, can hardly be real in it.

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And therefore these two make up but one Qualification, as it were, of *Christian Charity*, that it be *without Partiality*, and *without Hypocrisy*, that is, free from that wicked Disimulation, that is ready at all Turns to make fair and plausible Professions of all manner of Kindness and Gentleness, without any Reality or good Intention at the bottom. An odious Imputation this wherever it lights; and yet 'tis what no Age has wanted Examples of. And it is too obvious in our own Observation, that some Men who would fain pass for the *Meek-Ones of the Earth*, the only Men of *universal Charity*, and *true Christian Moderation*. Is it not obvious, I say, that these Men, when they have had the Power, have been far enough from shewing that *Meekness* and *Tenderness* to others, which they always plead for, when the Case is their own, and which (rightly understood) no *Christian* ought to deny to another? which manifest Partiality is a very suspicious Sign of *Hypocrisy*. For they that will not actually shew their *Charity* when it is in their Power, can hardly be thought (whatever Pretences they may make) to have any Disposition to Charity, when it is out of their



their Power. Unfeigned Love will not, SERM.  
ought not to hide itself, when it has the XV.  
proper Occasion to make itself manifest ;  
but it will study and endeavour to give real  
Demonstrations of its own Sincerity, not in  
*Word, or in Tongue, but in Deed, or in Truth.*

And *Charity*, thus qualified, as has been  
said, *without Partiality, and without Hypo-*  
*crisy*, is deservedly reckoned among the  
Properties of that *Wisdom, which is from a-*  
*bove.* For it is conformable to the Pattern  
of our *Heavenly Father*, who pours down  
his common Blessings without Distinction,  
and maketh the *Sun to rise on the Evil, and*  
*the Good, and sendeth the Rain on the Just*  
*and the Unjust*, [Mat. v. 45.] and who hath  
so signally, so marvellously manifested his  
Love to the whole Race of Mankind, in that  
*He sent his only begotten Son into the World,*  
*that the World through Him might be saved.*

It is conformable to the Precept and Pat-  
tern of our dear *Redeemer, who gave himself*  
*a Ransom*, and has commanded us to *love*  
*our Neighbour as ourselves*, (and Self-love  
never feigns) nay to *love one another even as*  
*He hath loved us*; the Generosity and Sincere-  
ness of whose Love nothing can surpass.

It

*Of the Wisdom that is from above.*

It is conformable lastly to the whole Current of the Doctrine, delivered by his Apostles, that *we should owe no Man any Thing, but to love one another* [Rom. xiii. 8.] this being a Debt that is unexceptionably due to all; and that this Love should *be without Dissimulation*, fervent and unfeigned, as springing from a *pure Heart*, which, as it gives a constant Warmth to it, so it will not admit of the base Mixture of any Fraud or Falshood.

And now, having run through the Particulars of the Text, we may make this double Use of that Description of *Religious Wisdom*, which is here presented to us. (1<sup>st</sup>.) It may teach us to distinguish between Religion that is truly such, and that which is only pretended and counterfeit. (2<sup>dly</sup>.) It may serve to make us in love with the Practice of that *true Religion* which is so very beautiful and amiable in the *Idea*.

(1<sup>st</sup>.) It may teach us to distinguish between Religion that is truly such, and that which is only pretended and counterfeit. For though we have not here a perfect Enumeration of all the Parts and Offices of the *Christian Religion*, yet there is a Concurrency

rence

rence of so many of the most eminent Properties of it, that in whomsoever these are to be found, it may reasonably and it ought charitably to be presumed that the rest are not wanting. But in whomsoever these are wanting, that Man may pretend what he will, but in the Judgment of Charity itself, he cannot pass for one that is *truly Religious*. For were he really so, he would not, he could not allow himself in the gross Neglect of some of the most principal Branches of his known Duty. And therefore if it is notoriously seen, that a Man is wedded to the World, and his own Lusts, or if he takes more Care to put on a fair Out-side, than he makes Conscience of cleansing the inner Man; if his Actions plainly bespeak him to be of an unquiet, unteachable, unpersuadable, inexorable, or ungovernable Spirit: If he is totally devoid of Charity, or partially contents himself with some Notions of it, or empty Pretences to it; I say, in such a Case it must be concluded, and (to prevent the Scandal it would cast upon our *Common Christianity*) it ought to be pronounced, *That Man's Religion is vain*: Let him be otherwise never so specious a Professor, never so earnest

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earnest a Stickler, *his Religion is vain*; he may *deceive his own Heart*, but hardly the Eye of any judicious Observer, much less of him, who *searcheth the Heart, and trieth the Reins*.

It was by such bad Qualities as these, that the impious *Gnosticks*, who are pointed at in the Text, betrayed themselves of old: And this will always be a Rule whereby to judge of great Pretenders, *viz.* to confront their Profession and their Practice. But

(2dly.) Another good Use of the Description of the Text, might be to make us in love with the Practice of that Religion which appears so very beautiful, and amiable in the *Idea*.

For I think I may take it for granted, that Religion, as here described, is really a Thing that is so very taking and engaging, that it needs nothing but its own intrinsic Worth to recommend it. And, as *Plato* said of Truth, if we could once see with our Eyes, it would most certainly ravish us with Love and Admiration. And I dare appeal even to the inward Sense of those who are Strangers to it themselves, when they chance to espy the Man that is adorned with all these excellent



*Of the Wisdom that is from above.* 397

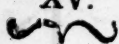
lent Qualities, and exemplary in all these Virtues, I appeal to them I say, if they have not a secret Veneration for him. They need not dissemble, they cannot deny it; for I am sure they cannot help it.

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And if this be so, sure it should be well worth their While to try how it would look, and how they could like it in themselves. And oh! that we could once be so happy as to see it reduced to a general Practice, and to reap the blessed Fruits of it. For if Men would in good Earnest endeavour to disengage themselves and their Affections from the World, and to *abstain from those fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul*. If they would take as much conscientious Pains to be what they affect to be thought, as they use dishonest Art to appear what they care not to be: if they would once love Peace, and make Peace, and cherish and preserve it in Families, Neighbourhoods and Communities both Civil and Ecclesiastical: If they would be willing to be guided by Reason rather than Passion, and to be governed by Equity rather than prevailing Custom, or the mere Pretence of Justice: If they would be but easy to be persuaded, when Truth once appears, and Er-

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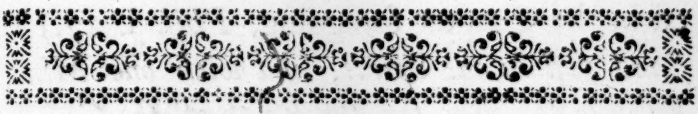
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ror is detected, and as easy to be intreated in Cases of Offence or Trespas; had they but Hearts large enough to entertain that noble and divine Guest of an extensive and undissembled Charity, without any partial and peevish Exceptions, or hypocritical and insincere Professions: Would they but *thus learn Christ, and thus adorn his Doctrine in all Things*, I dare prophesy the Face of Things would soon change, and the World would appear a much more desirable Place than it is: Men would be better Neighbours, and Friends, and Subjects, and in a Word, better *Christians*, and more regardful of their Duty in all Relations and Capacities: They would be convinced by sensible Experience, *that Godliness is profitable for all Things, both in the Life that now is, and in that which is to come.* And that Religion only chalks out the Way for us so to *pass through Things Temporal, as not to miss of the Things which are Eternal.*

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore.*  
Amen.

SER-



## S E R M O N XVI.

Of the Nature and Properties of  
*Christian Humility.*



PHILIP. ii. 3. latter Part.

— *But in Lowliness of Mind let  
each esteem other better than them-  
selves.*

OUR Apostle, having in the two first SERM.  
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Verses of this Chapter most ear-  
nestly and pathetically recommend-  
ed to his *Philippians* that Unity of Affection,  
and that Unanimity both in Doctrine and  
Practice, which was necessary both to ani-  
mate

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mate their Zeal and strengthen their Perseverance, and enable them (as he had exhorted in the Chapter foregoing, *Phil. i. 27.*) to *stand fast in one Spirit, and with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel*; He proceeds in the former Part of this third Verse to remove the chief Impediments of this happy Concord, *viz. (1st.) Contentiousness, or a troublesome Itch of disputing every Thing, merely for the Sake of Contradiction or Victory. And (2dly.) a Thirst after Applause and Popularity, or a Love of the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.* Both which are very destructive to that affectionate Love, and unanimous Agreement, in which the Beauty, the Honour, the Strength of the *Christian Religion* do consist. *Let nothing* (therefore says he) *be done through Strife or vain Glory*: And then, that the Cement of this *Christian Charity* might be strong, and the Frame compact he lays the Foundation of it deep in the Grace of Humility and mutual Condescension.

*But in Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* This is the Connexion of the Words as they stand related to what goes before; but I shall crave leave

at



at present, to consider them apart, and accordingly I shall in the Sequel of this Discourse,

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*First*, Give some Account of the Nature and Properties of *Christian Humility*.

*Secondly*, I shall propose to your Consideration the blessed Advantages that attend it.

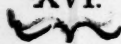
*Thirdly*, I shall conclude with a general Exhortation to the Practice of it, together with some special Directions whereby the better to attain to it. And

*First*, I shall give some Account of the Nature and Properties of *Christian Humility*. And the just Notion of *Christian Humility*, as I apprehend it, is this, "It is a  
" modest and mean Opinion of ourselves,  
" of our own Endowments or Attainments,  
" arising from a reverential Regard towards  
" God, and a true Estimate of the Nature,  
" the State and Condition of Mankind."

1<sup>st</sup>. It is a modest and mean Opinion of ourselves: For the Seat of Humility is in the Mind; and therefore it is not to be measured, nor indeed distinguished, either by Mens outward Circumstances, or their outward Deportment.

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Not their outward Circumstances : For an humble Fortune and a haughty Spirit can make a Shift sometimes to dwell together. The Poor may be proud, (and often are) as well as the Rich, to shew how little Reason for it there is in either. And it is particularly observable of those, who after a Flow of Plenty and Prosperity have been reduced to Need, that they often retain but too high a Value for themselves, and, even at their lowest Ebb, won't suffer the Providence or the Grace of God to have its due Effect upon them, and make them truly humble.

Nor is Mens outward Deportment any surer Token of a lowly Heart : For Gesture is an artificial Thing : Men may stoop, and cringe, and bow popularly low, and yet have ambitious Designs in their Heads. And Speech is not always the just Interpreter of the Mind : Men may use a condescending Style, and yet swell inwardly with big Thoughts of themselves. Nay and even the Affectation of Humility in this Sort, is oftentimes but the covering for Pride, and a Covering (how much soever Men may please themselves in acting a Part) by much too thin to conceal it.

It

It remains therefore that Humility must consist in a modest and mean Opinion of ourselves, i. e. in a judgment sedately formed in the Mind, concerning the Smallness and Worthlessness, or at most the Mediocrity of all that we are, and have, or can pretend to. Not that we are bound to judge otherwise than we really find by ourselves. The Scholar that by Pains and Assiduity has made a considerable Progress in the Arts and Sciences, is not in Modesty obliged to pronounce himself an *Idiot*, nor the Upright, who is conscious of his own Integrity, to condemn himself for an *Hypocrite*. For this would be not only to undervalue, but unthankfully to deny the Gifts and Graces that God has bestowed upon us, which is the Effect of Pride, and not Humility.

But still whatever our Improvements may be, intellectual or moral, *we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think*, but to think soberly, according to the Measure that God has dealt to every Man; and that in Duty and Deference to him. For

2dly, As the Definition proceeds, Humility is a modest and mean Opinion of

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ourselves, arising primarily from a reverential Regard towards God; whether we consider him as a Being in his own Nature of the most superlative Perfection, or with Respect to us, of the most diffusive and universal Beneficence.

If we consider the superlative Perfection of the divine Nature, it instantly commands our profoundest Veneration, which is no other than the Homage of a lowly Mind. For (to borrow the pertinent and well-weighed Words of the learned *Mede*, Page 211, 212. Vol. 1.) “ All Excellency is  
 “ worshipped with Humility, Reverence,  
 “ and Submission; and the sovereign or supreme Excellency of God must be adored  
 “ with the lowest Demission of Mind, and  
 “ with the greatest Stoop the Soul can make.  
 “ We find by Experience, that Disposition  
 “ of the Eye which fitteth it to behold the  
 “ visible Sun, makes a Man blind when he  
 “ looks down upon himself. And so the  
 “ Apprehension of the Excellency of God  
 “ ten thousand Times brighter than the Sun,  
 “ must needs darken all over-weening Worthiness in ourselves. The greater we would  
 “ apprehend his Power, the more sensible  
 “ we



“we must be of our own Weakness. The  
“greater we acknowledge and adore his  
“Goodness, the less Goodness must we see  
“in ourselves. The more we would appre-  
“hend his Wisdom, the less are we to be  
“puffed up with our own Knowledge.” So  
that Humility naturally takes its Rise from  
an awful Apprehension of God’s adorable Per-  
fections.

And it gets still a deeper rooting in our  
Hearts, if we consider moreover God’s uni-  
versal Beneficence towards us. *For every  
good and perfect Gift cometh from above, even  
from the Father of Lights* (James i. 17.)  
and therefore ’tis fit that the Goodness and  
Perfection should be solely ascribed to him,  
though the Advantage redounds to us. It  
is fit that the Praise and Glory should be en-  
tirely *his*, and *ours* only the humble Acknow-  
ledgment. And whoever it is that in any  
Respect excels his Neighbour, if he is Mas-  
ter of any Degree of Seriousness or Sobriety,  
he must not, he cannot arrogate any Merit  
to himself, but in a grateful Sense of God’s  
distinguishing Mercies, he will lay his Hand  
upon his Heart, and say, *Who maketh Thee  
to differ from another?* (1 Cor. iv. 7.) is it

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*hast thou that thou didst not receive? either as an Endowment of Nature, or a Blessing upon thy Industry, or a Gift, of Providence, or a Grace of God's holy Spirit? And therefore Why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? nay rather why dost thou not humble thy self and confess, that Thou art nothing of thy self, that Thou hast nothing of thy own, but that God is All in All? This seems to be the natural Result of such Thoughts in an ingenuous Mind; and consequently, this is what gives Birth and Encrease to true Humility. But*

*3dly, That which jointly conduces to beget in us this Humility or Lowliness of Mind, is a true Estimate of the Nature, the State, and Condition of Mankind.*

Now Man is in Nature a dependent, weak Creature, of very narrow Capacities, and very great Imperfections. His State in this Life (at best) is mutable and mortal; and his Condition, by Reason of his Sins, is still more miserable, and without Repentance, will be much more so hereafter, and that for ever. And surely such a Creature as this, must always carry sufficient Matter  
of

of Humiliation about him, and whenever he looks a little into himself, he cannot but be abased in his own Eyes.

For besides that he depends upon God for all that he has or is capable of having, how few and inconsiderable are his Improvements, and how many and great his Defects? and how gross the Neglect, nay how shameful the Abuse even of those Talents which he has, and perhaps foolishly boasts of?

Take the Instance where you will, and this will soon be made appear. Let it be in the most elevated and improved Understanding that ever any Man was blest with, yet I may challenge him (as God did *Job xxxviii. 1, &c.*) *Gird up now thy Loins like a Man, and answer, Where wast thou when the Foundations of the Earth were laid, declare if thou hast Understanding? Who hath laid the Measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the Line upon it? whereupon are the Foundations thereof fastened? Or who hath laid the Corner-Stone? Or who shut up the Sea with Doors when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the Womb? Hast thou entred into the Springs of the Sea? or hast thou walked in the Search of the Depth?*

SERM. *Where is the Way where Light dwelleth? and*  
 XVI. *as for Darknefs, where is the Place thereof?*

*Knowest thou the Ordinances of Heaven? canst thou set the Dominion of it in the Earth?* These, and a thousand Questions besides there are, concerning the wondrous Works of him that is perfect in Knowledge, which do not only exceed the Comprehension of the Vulgar, but do also baffle all the Judgment and Penetration of the deepest *Philosopher*: Nay, the most common and familiar Appearance in Nature, every Spire of Grass that grows, and every Pebble we tread upon, is big with Difficulties enough to puzzle the very best of 'em. And yet vain Man would be wise! and is wise enough (if some Pretenders may be believed) to find Flaws and Inconsistencies in God's Creation, *nay, to find out the Almighty himself to Perfection* and set Bounds to his very Essence. But surely, in sober thinking, the Weakness of human Understanding, and its Vanity together are the proper Arguments to excite and encrease nothing else but our Humility.

And so in like Manner is the Frailty and Perverseness of *human Will*. Freedom of Choice (if we could but make a right Use of it)



it) is indeed a noble Privilege, and that alone which makes us capable of the Reward of Heaven. But alas! if we consider, that *in many Things we offend all*, and that the best of Men are subject to be misled, not only through Ignorance or Surprise, but even by Instigation of the Devil, and their own carnal Lusts: If we consider that there is a Proneness in corrupt Nature to that which is Evil, and that the Servants of Sin are ready upon any Terms to part with their boasted Liberty, and even *sell themselves to do Wickedness*, and put it out of their Power at length to do otherwise: I say, all this considered is so great an Abatement to the Privilege of Free-will, that it becomes in Effect a Curse, in that the Abuse of it renders Men liable to so much the greater Punishment. However, it is doubtless in this Respect too just an Occasion of our Humiliation.

And if the Faculties of the Mind of Man, and the Imperfections and Abuses to which they are liable, do read us such a constant Lecture of Humility, much more must the Things that are without us, such as are the Ornaments or Accomplishments of the Body,  
or

~~SEEM~~ or the Appendages and Conveniences of Life,  
~~XVI~~ which are exposed to daily Casualties and  
 Uncertainties: For what signifies bodily  
 Strength, that Time will waste, and Death  
 will conquer, especially, if whilst it remains  
 in its Vigour, it be made the Instrument of  
 Violence or Debauchery? what signifies the  
 Varnish of a little Beauty, which Sickness  
 may tarnish, and Time will wear off, and  
 the Grave turn into Rottenness? especially if  
 it proves (as it often does) a Snare to Chasti-  
 ty, as well as a Temptation to Pride. What  
 signify Riches, that will if they do not leave  
 us must one Day be left by us, especially if  
 we mis-employ 'em in-Vanity and Luxury?  
 What signify Honours and Preferments?  
 especially if Men debase themselves by dis-  
 honourable Practices, and corrupt others by  
 their lewd Example. I say, What do these  
 Things signify in the *Christian's* Account? Just  
 nothing at all: nothing that can add to his  
 real Worth; but they do swell the Number  
 and Value of his Debts: For *to whomsoever*  
*much is given, of him shall much be required.*  
 And wheresoever God has bestowed any of  
 these his lesser Gifts or other his greater Mer-  
 cies, he expects a punctual Account and an  
 answer-

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answerable Improvement ; and where any Neglect or Abuse appears, there he will inflict the sorer Punishment. *The unprofitable Servant shall be cast into outer Darknes.*

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And alas ! if when we have done all we can, we are still but *unprofitable Servants*, those many Advantages which the wicked have (and that above other Men sometimes) are but the Aggravations of their Wickedness, and consequently, That which too often ministers Fuel to their Pride, if it were duly pondered, ought to be the sad Subject of their Humiliation : For certainly, that which will sink them (if not timely repented of) into eternal Perdition, if once they consider of it, must humble them with a Vengeance.

And thus far I have been endeavouring to explain the Nature of *Christian Humility*, together with the Ground and Reasons into which it is resolved ; it being, as I hope I have made out, a modest and mean Opinion of ourselves, and our own Worth, arising from a dutiful Regard towards God, and a true Estimate of the Nature, State, and Condition of Mankind.

And by the Way, this Description of the Nature of *Christian Humility* gives us a satisfactory

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factory Account how it comes to pass, that there is so little of it to be seen, either in the Writings, or the Lives of the *Heathen Moralists*. For their Notions of God were not high enough, to make them think meanly of themselves. So far from that, that the *Stoicks* (as grave a Sect as any among them) do make bold to equal their *wise Man*, if not prefer him to the Gods, as appears in several Rants of *Seneca*, and others. And besides, they were too little acquainted with the Cause of the Weakness and Depravity of human Nature, to be affected with a just and humble Sense of it; and therefore no Wonder if they were too apt to over-rate their small Performances, and (having no certain Expectation of a better Reward) to make the Applause of Men, and a lasting Memory, their chief Aim and End, and to boast of it most immoderately, (as *Tully* frequently does) even before they could be sure of the Reversion. But to return. I proceed now

*Secondly*, To enumerate some of the genuine Properties of true *Christian Humility*. But I shall not pretend to reckon up *all*, and I shall but briefly mention those I do, because



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cause I have been pretty large in describing the Nature of the Virtue in general, and therefore its particular Properties will be the sooner discerned and understood. And,

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1<sup>st</sup>. The first and principal Property of *Christian Humility* is a profound Veneration for Almighty God; and an entire Submission of our feeble Understandings and frail Wills, to his infallible Word, and most righteous Commandments. This is what immediately results from a Sense of that Subjection which we owe to God: and 'tis at once the Cause and the Effect of our Humility, and therefore altogether inseparable from it. For the worthy and reverent Conceptions we have of God, do induce us to humble ourselves before him, and the humbler we are in his Sight the more we shall revere him.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Another Property of true Humility, is never to arrogate that to ourselves, which we have not, and perhaps are not capable of having. For Example, an humble *Christian* will not pretend to a perfect Comprehension of the Wisdom, the Counsel, and Essence of the *Deity*, [as these old Exploders

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Exploders of *Mysteries* in Effect do] as considering that God is infinite, and he is finite; and therefore that such Knowledge is too excellent and wonderful for him to attain to,

In like Manner, he will not dare to lay Claim (as some vain *Enthusiasts* do) to perfect Innocence, and spotless Purity, because such Perfection is inconsistent with the Frailties of this mortal State, and contrary to the Experience of the very best of Men, from whose common Lot he knows no Reason, and he has not the Vanity to think himself exempted.

3dly, Another Property of *Christian Humility* is to own all that Good with which we are endued, or of which we are possessed, to be a Receipt from God; and that not obtained by any Merit of our own, but freely granted to us out of his mere Grace and Favour, and to hold ourselves accordingly obliged to dedicate all our Faculties and Powers, Endowments and Improvements, in a Word all God's manifold Gifts to the Donor's Honour and Service; and this also out of a pure Sense of Duty, and not the least Conceit of Merit or *Supererogation*.

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4thly, Another Property of Humility is *not* to despise any Man, as thinking him an Inferior, especially if the Difference only lies in the Enjoyment of some temporal Advantages, which perhaps he wants. For there can be no such Disparity between *Christian* and *Christian*, as should render them the Object of each other's Contempt, since they are *all Servants to the same Master*. And God, who is the inexhaustible Fountain of all Good, does *give liberally to every Man*, so far as he sees needful and convenient: And when he does withhold that from one, which he bestows upon another, it is his mere Good-Pleasure that makes the Distinction. And this is Reason sufficient to excite the Praise and Gratitude of the Receiver, but not sure, to maintain his Pride and Insolence.

5thly, And *lastly*, Another Property of Humility, is that which is indeed the lowest Step of modest Condescension, *viz.* as the Words of my Text are, *Each to esteem other better than ourselves, in Honour preferring one another*, as St. Paul says in another Place, [Rom. xii. 10.] and *being all subject one to another*, which St. Peter makes the pecu-

peculiar Ornament of an humble Spirit. (1  
Peter v. 5.)

Not that Humility can be thought to bring Men all upon the level, and to cancel those Relations and Obligations which they are under one towards another, requiring the Parent to be as dutiful to his Child, as he would expect the Child to be to him, and so in all other like Cases.

This to be sure cannot be the Intention of Humility, which was never yet known to be a Disturber of the Peace and good Order of the World. All that is meant by it, therefore is, That we should all, in our respective Ranks and Stations, be ready to perform all mutual good Offices to each other, and make all fit Allowances that every Case requires the Magistrate exercising his Power with Moderation, (which is the Humility that is proper to him) and the Subject paying his Obedience with Chearfulness (which is the Humility that becomes them).

Moreover, when we are thus directed, *Each to prefer other before ourselves*; it is not to be imagined that we are immediately obliged to think every other Man more just, or more temperate, or in short every Way a better



better *Christian* than ourselves; because the contrary of all this may be evident beyond all Contradiction. SERM.  
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But yet we are bound to hope and believe the best of every Man, when there is no Evidence to the contrary; and even when there is, it is still the Business of Charity, to extenuate and cover other Mens Failings, and 'tis the Business of Humility to judge and condemn ourselves, for our own.

And when we behold, and lament our own Unworthiness, it will become us with St. *Paul* to rank our selves with the *least of Saints*, and the *chiefest of Sinners*. (1 *Tim.* i. 15.) among whom tho' possibly there are those that do exceed us, yet *since by the Grace of God we are what we are*, we ought most heartily to pray, and charitably to presume, that the Grace of God may be not only sufficient for them, but also exceeding abundant, that so at last they may be presented as acceptable and unrepensible in *his Sight*. And let so much suffice to have been spoken briefly concerning the Properties of *Christian Humility*. I come now,

3<sup>dly</sup>, To propose to your Consideration the blessed Advantages that attend it. And

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1<sup>st</sup>. One great Advantage of it is, that it is a Disposition of all others the best suited to Religion both in Theory and Practice : For it subjugates both the Understanding and the Will, and thereby renders Men teachable and tractable, and prepares them to receive any Doctrine that is evidenced to be of God, and to obey any Command imposed by him. Hence is it that our Saviour assigns it the first Place among the *Beatitudes*, because it was the best Preparatory for the Reception of the Gospel. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*, (*Mat. v. 3.*) i. e. those that are low in their own Eyes, and sensible of their own Wants and Wretchedness : *For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* i. e. They are fitly disposed and qualified to become true Disciples, and good *Christians*. Whereas we read on the other Hand, *that not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called*, (*1 Cor. i. 26.*) because the Conceit of their fleshly Wisdom, and worldly Greatness was an Obstacle to their Conviction and Conversion.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Another Advantage of Humility is, that it is the Foundation and Prop of all other Virtues, and makes them acceptable and

and available with God ; whereas without it they have no Life nor Vigour : They are of no Value nor Efficacy. Take away that Humility which arises from worthy Conceptions of God's infinite Perfections, and Piety itself falls to the Ground, and the Worship of God is turned into mere Formality and Mockery. Take away that Humility, which arises from a tender Sense of the Infirmities of human Nature, and Charity soon degenerates into Ostentation and Vain-Glory. Take away that Humility which makes our Duty our Choice, and all our Obedience is no better than Hypocrisy, and our pretended Righteousness, tho' it may lift us up in our own Thoughts, yet it can never approve us to God. For we find, after the *Pharisee* in the Gospel had presented so large and fair a Catalogue of his Merits, that the *Publican* whom he had so much despised, went down justified rather than he.

3dly, Humility is the best Means and Furtherance of our Growth in Grace, and Progress in Godliness. *For God resisteth the Proud,* (*James iv. 6.*) i. e. those who scorn, and do despite to his holy Spirit, he stops them of their boasting, by the withdrawing his

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Grace, and a judicial Desertion : *But he giveth Grace to the Humble* : i. e. a farther Supply of it to those, who, being under the Prevention and Direction of it already, do in the Consciousness of their own Infirmities, place their Sufficiency in God alone.

And such is the Temper of these humble Souls, that whatever their Attainments be in Virtue, they will not be *high-minded but fear* ; they will not sit down in Sloth and Security, as thinking they are already come to the End of their Race, but they will be still pressing forwards, and going on to Perfection, that so at last *They may receive the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls.* (1 Peter i. 9.)

4thly, Humility is the best Promoter and Preserver of Love and Peace. For it is a Virtue this that is in Favour both with God and Man, whereas Pride is hateful to both. But there is something so very winning and engaging in the whole Manner and Deportment of the humble Man that it must needs gain upon the Affections of every one ; even the Scornor that tramples upon him cannot deny him this Testimony. For he is ever ready to give to every Man his  
Due,

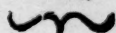


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Due, if not more, without once considering what Returns he is like to meet with. He gives no Offence willingly, and takes none hastily. He puts up many a Wrong silently, and never asserts his own Right till Necessity compels him, and then it is with the utmost Moderation and all reasonable Allowances, that so, *if it be possible, he may live peaceably with all Men.* But above all Things, the Peace of God's Church is that to which he has the tenderest Regard, as knowing the pernicious Consequence of religious Quarrels, which in his Account are so many Contradictions. And therefore in Matters of Revelation, he thinks it the highest Reason to subscribe God's Authority, and the Sense of Scripture currently received from ancient Tradition, and in Matters of Prudence to be guided by the Determination of his lawful Superiors; and thus he endeavours *to keep the Unity of the Faith, in the Bond of Peace*, to which he is always ready to sacrifice any private Opinion of his own. Whereas on the contrary it is notorious enough that most of the *Hereses* that have infested the *Christian Church*, sprung originally, not from want of Light but Love, not from

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from honest Ignorance, but arrogant Conceit; nor yet from any Advantage in Knowledge above other Men, but from a Singularity of Opinion, in Opposition to those who were soberer and wiser.

5thly And lastly, Humility is the readiest Way to Honour and Glory: For after all, it is an Argument of a Spirit that is truly great, to neglect and disregard those frothy Things, that puff up only *little empty Souls*, and often break the Bubble that is big with them. And accordingly, Humility often meets with that Respect which Pride is not able to command. For every well-manner'd Man will be ready to rise up to him, who condescendingly sits down in the lowest Place; whereas the Contempt with which the Proud treat others, is often turned upon themselves; and when all is done they receive Honour from those whom they despise, and it is strange that their little Opinion (which in other Cases they would think Scorn of) should be thought to contribute to their Greatness.

Upon the whole Matter; however the humble Man may be obscur'd in this World, yet he shall shine forth illustriously in the

next, and shall quite eclipse those who now pride themselves in the splendid Figure that they make : For we have our Saviour's own Word for it, that *whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased ; and whosoever shall humble himself, shall be exalted.* (Mat. xxiii. 12. Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14.) which does sometimes take Place here, but without all Doubt shall be abundantly made good hereafter.

To conclude therefore, Let us all be exhorted to do as our great Master did before us, *Let the same Mind be in us that was also in Christ Jesus : Who being in the Form of God, thought it not Robbery to be equal with God : And yet made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men : And being found in Fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross.* (Philip. ii. 5, &c.)

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore.

F I N I S.

## E R R A T A.

**P** Age 32. Line 2. read 23. 14. p. 51. l. 6. r. *well-advis'd*. p. 81. l. 1. r. *by*. p. 111. l. 13. r. *common*. p. 142. l. 6. r. *and*. p. 181. l. 17. r. *too*. p. 196. l. ult after *sure*. r. ), p. 197. l. 5. r. *virtually*. l. 21. after *Beast* r. ). after *significantly* d. ). p. 23. l. 24. d. *and*. p. 250. l. 16. after *suam* add *J*. p. 282. l. 25. d. *I*. p. 296. l. 5. r. *ingenuous*. p. 320. l. 9. r. *spe*. p. 354. l. 16. r. *Impurity*. p. 375. l. 2. r. *doubling*. p. 396. l. 22. add *It*. p. 416. l. 18. after *requires* add *;*.



**S**peedily will be published the Eighth and Last Volume of Dr. *Moss's* Sermons, containing the seven Sermons published in His Life-time, with three or four additional Sermons never before printed, and a large Alphabetical Index to the Whole.



